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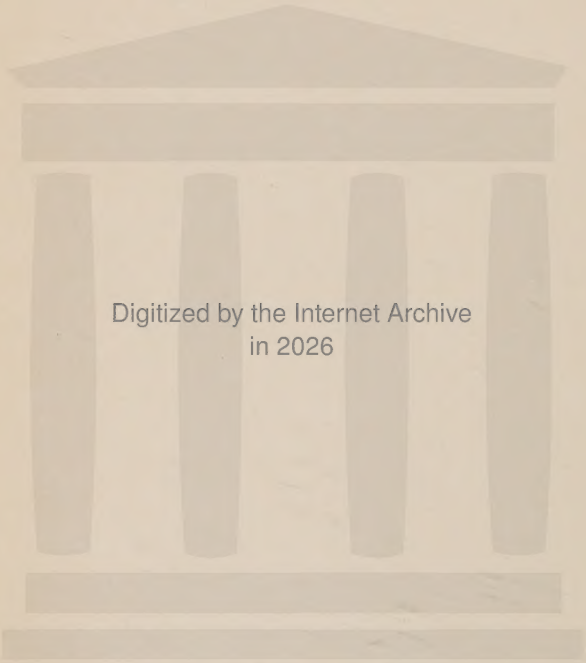
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ENGLISH PHILOSOPHERS AND SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

The Channels of English Literature

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ENGLISH PHILOSOPHERS
AND
SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

JAMES SETH, M.A.
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UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

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THIS STUDY IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED

BY AN OLD PUPIL

PREFACE

THE aim of this volume is to trace the chief stages in the development of English philosophy, through a study of its leading representatives in their relation to one another and to the general movement of English philosophical thought. Such an exhaustive account of the subject as will be found, so far as the seventeenth century is concerned, in Charles de Rémusat's *Histoire de la Philosophie en Angleterre depuis Bacon jusqu'à Locke*, or in Professor Sorley's admirable chapters in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, lies entirely beyond the scope of the present work. The same may be said of such a treatment as Green's in his well-known Introduction to Hume's *Treatise*, or Professor Forsyth's in his recent careful and suggestive study of the 'method and general development' of English Philosophy.[1] My effort has been to concentrate attention on the epoch-making philosophers rather than on the less important figures in the movement, and on the actual thought of the individual philosophers rather than on the logical sequence of English philosophy as a chapter in the development of ideas. Moreover, in accordance with the plan of the Series, as well as in accordance with the facts of the case, English philosophy has been regarded as a form of English literature. At the same time the term 'philosophy' has been in-

[1] *English Philosophy: a Study of its Method and General Development*, by Thomas M. Forsyth (1910).

terpreted in a strict sense, which excludes such writers as Carlyle or Matthew Arnold from the study here undertaken.

I have to make grateful acknowledgment of the help which has been ungrudgingly rendered by my friend and colleague, Mr. Henry Barker, Lecturer in Moral Philosophy in this University, who has carefully read the entire work both in manuscript and in proof, and whose advice has been of great value at many points. I have also to thank Mr. John Handyside, Lecturer in Philosophy in the University of Liverpool, Mr. John Laird, Assistant in Moral Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews, and Mr. John Baillie, Assistant in Logic and Metaphysics in this University, for their kindness in revising the proofs, and for a number of important suggestions.

JAMES SETH.

February, 1912.

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ENGLISH PHILOSOPHERS AND SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTION

English philosophy is entitled to be called literature in a sense in which the philosophy of perhaps no other nation has the same right to the name. Whether we think of Bacon and Hobbes in the seventeenth century, of Berkeley and Hume in the eighteenth, or of Coleridge and Ferrier in the nineteenth, we cannot but recognise qualities of style which entitle the writer to rank among the masters of English prose of the expository and controversial type with the best essayists of our country. Even if we take a philosopher of lower literary merit, like Locke or Reid, we find that in comparison with the philosophers of the Continent, and especially of Germany, the style is characterised by the absence of severity and technicality; and while this may lead to a certain loss of precision which causes difficulty in the interpretation of the philosophy, the fact that the works are written in the vernacular adds to their literary value. The untechnical, as well as the literary, quality of the style of English philosophy is doubtless in some measure due to the fact that its chief representatives were not, like the great German idealists, university professors, but men of affairs, in close contact with the life of the nation. This is true, more or less, of Bacon, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and the Utilitarians; and even Hobbes tells us

that his chief works were the fruit of the stirring events of his time. We cannot but note a certain deterioration of style as the consequence of the increasingly academic character of our national philosophy. In the seventeenth century the Cambridge Platonists are a group of academic thinkers, whose style is marred by technicalities and spoiled by over-quotation; while Hutcheson and Adam Smith, Reid, Hamilton, and other leaders of the Scottish school, as well as the representatives of Absolute Idealism in the nineteenth century, are academic teachers. With the exception of Adam Smith, Reid, and Ferrier, these later writers are either without literary gifts, or tend to a style too technical and academic.

A distinguished authority on the subject has remarked on the unity of type which is characteristic of English philosophy from first to last. Speaking of the five dominating names—Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume—Croom Robertson says that 'whatever their difference of individual character and aims,' these philosophers 'display a greater general similarity of intellectual vision than can be matched, for such a succession of first-rate minds, from the history of any other modern people.' In the various systems of German thought, on the contrary, in spite of their apparent uniformity, 'upon a closer view the distance is seen to be enormous from the dogmatism of Leibnitz to the critical spirit of Kant, or again from Kant's sober reserve to the stupendous confidence of Hegel; while after the lapse of 150 years from the time of Leibnitz, a general change of face may be said to have been made at last.'[1] While this contrast is, on the whole, a real one, yet it must not be over-estimated. A closer inspection discovers not only fundamental differences between the philosophical ideas of Bacon and those of Hobbes, but between Bacon and his later successors, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume; while in the philosophy of each of

[1] *Philosophical Remains*, p. 40.

these writers there is a diversity of philosophical tendency, and if we take account of writers who, though of inferior merit, are yet of much significance—the Cambridge Platonists, the 'moral sense' school of moralists, the Scottish intuitionists, and the advocates of absolute idealism —we discover a contrariety of doctrine which suggests a vigour and independence in the English philosophical mind which is hardly less remarkable than the characteristic stream of tendency which is generally identified with it.

Yet there is such a characteristic stream of tendency. Three main features can hardly fail to arrest the attention of the student of English philosophy, features which differentiate it from the philosophy of the Continent. These are (1) its experiential and inductive method, as distinguished from the rationalistic and deductive method of Continental philosophy; (2) the epistemological character of the former, in contrast with the ontological character of the latter; and (3) the practical or ethical interest which dominates the English, as contrasted with the metaphysical and speculative interest which dominates the Continental philosophy.

(1) Bacon shares with Descartes the honour of inaugurating the modern period of philosophy. Bacon's protest against the principle of authority, a principle which had been accepted with more or less unhesitating loyalty by the Scholastic philosophers, is no less vigorous than that of Descartes. Both alike are eager to substitute for faith and tradition the independent effort of the individual mind in the pursuit of truth. Bacon extends his protest to antiquity itself (for is not antiquity the youth of the world?), and to the chief philosopher of Greek antiquity who was also 'the philosopher' of the Middle Ages. He repudiates the method of the Aristotelian logic which had ruled the Scholastic philosophy in its period of maturity—the syllogistic or deductive method —and would substitute for it the inductive method of modern science. Descartes insists upon 'clear and distinct ideas' as the method of philosophical thought;

for Bacon the only fruitful method is a first-hand study or observation of the facts of experience. Descartes is the founder of the great speculative movement which proceeds through Spinoza to Leibnitz and Kant and Hegel; Bacon is the founder of the English experiential and inductive movement represented by Locke, Berkeley and Hume, Hartley, the Mills, and Spencer. The characteristic works of the Cartesian movement are the *Ethica more geometrico demonstrata* of Spinoza and the *Logic* of Hegel; those of the Baconian are the *Essay* of Locke, which follows the 'historical, plain method,' and the *Treatise* of Hume, 'an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects.' The ambition of the former movement is the attainment of systematic completeness, the vision of all things in their ultimate and perfect unity, or in God; such a philosophy rightly describes the subject-matter of its investigation, as well as the point of view from which it seeks to solve all its problems, in the words, *De Deo*. The ideal of the latter is to keep close to reality, to verify all its conclusions by reference to the facts of experience; it is always willing to sacrifice system and symmetry for faithfulness to the data of experience, speculative completeness for scientific correctness and empirical truth. The one effort is inspired by a passion for system, the other by a passion for actuality; the temper of the one is idealistic, that of the other realistic.

Though English philosophy begins, in Bacon, with an ambitious attempt to construct, at least in outline, the encyclopædia of the sciences, the basis of the entire structure being 'natural history,' or a collection of all the facts, it was not long before it narrowed its scope to the more specific problems of philosophy, and the experiential became the psychological or introspective method, the method of inner observation, which fixes attention upon the inner side of experience, or upon experience as such. This is the method common to Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, to the associationists and the Scottish intuitionists.

The experientialism of English philosophy must not be confused with empiricism. Empiricism is developed out of the experientialism of Locke by Hume and the associationists; but Locke himself is not, any more than Bacon, a mere empiricist. Nor are we to understand the contrast between the experientialism of English and the rationalism of Continental philosophy in any absolute sense. Not to speak of the experiential element in Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz, in Kant and Hegel, we find a constantly recurring note of rationalism in English philosophy—in Hobbes, in Locke, in the Cambridge Platonists and kindred thinkers of the seventeenth century, in the later speculations of Berkeley under the same Platonic influence, in the intuitionism of the Scottish school, and in the absolute idealism of the later nineteenth century, developed under the influence of German philosophy.

(2) Although Locke is the founder of English epistemology, it may be said that from the beginning of the movement the question of the nature of knowledge, of the true method of scientific explanation, forced itself upon the attention of English philosophy. Bacon's attack upon the Scholastic method, and his proposal to substitute for it a more adequate method, amounted in reality to a criticism of knowledge, as it had been previously understood, and a new theory of its essential nature and method of procedure. The appeal to the facts of experience which he inaugurated was at the same time a condemnation of the accepted method of deductive or dialectical explanation. His account of the various *idola* or preconceptions which vitiate the knowledge of his age is, in the main, a statement of the characteristic defects of the Scholastic method. While Descartes also begins with a repudiation of the old knowledge, and with a characterisation of the new, which he proposes to substitute for it, he quickly passes from the problem of knowledge to that of metaphysical or ontological construction, and his example is followed by his successors, who, with the notable exception of Kant, accept the Cartesian ideal of know-

ledge, and are preoccupied with metaphysical construction rather than with the problem of knowledge or method.[1]

Locke is the first English philosopher to substitute the problem of knowledge for that of reality, holding, like Kant in his proposed 'criticism' of human knowledge, that this is the previous question which must be answered before the metaphysical question of the nature of reality can be attempted with any hope of success. In his own memorable words, 'It is ambition enough to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge.'[2] His main difficulty is to show how knowledge can be at once general and real; and his conclusion is that it is either general and unreal, or real but merely particular. Our deficiency of certain knowledge is supplied, he holds, by that 'opinion,' 'faith,' or 'assent' which is based upon probability, a conclusion which may be compared with that of the later Kantian criticism. While Locke had protested against 'innate ideas,' Berkeley's protest was directed against 'abstract ideas'; and his nominalistic interpretation of the significance of general terms, as reducibile to the particular ideas which they represent, is closely connected with his reduction of the *esse* of the material world to its *percipi*. His theory of knowledge yields immediately a corresponding theory of reality. All that was left for Hume to do, to reach his sceptical dissolution of knowledge, was to extend the Berkeleyan nominalism from matter to mind, and to identify the connexions between impressions and ideas with the customary association which Berkeley had already recognised under the name of 'suggestion.' Thus the result of the sustained effort

[1] Hobbes, like Bacon, lays the basis of his system in a theory of knowledge; but his interest is rather in the materialistic system which he proceeds to construct on this basis than in the security of the basis itself. The Cambridge Platonists and other rationalistic critics of Hobbes in the seventeenth century similarly propose a theory of knowledge which carries with it a corresponding theory of reality.

[2] *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Epistle to the Reader.

of English philosophy during its best period to solve the problem of knowledge is the sceptical dissolution of knowledge into opinion, of certainty into probability, of rational connexion into customary association. And while the refutation of this scepticism is attempted independently by the Scottish intuitionists and, under the inspiration of Kant and his successors, by the idealists of the nineteenth century, the doctrine of associationism is developed by Hartley and the Mills, and Spencer invokes the aid of the new principles of evolution and heredity to reinforce the same view.

It may be said, therefore, without qualification that, since Locke's epoch-making substitution of the epistemological for the ontological problem, the basis of English metaphysical theory has always been sought in a theory of knowledge. To take two notable examples from opposite schools of thought, section i. of Ferrier's *Institutes of Metaphysic* is devoted to 'the epistemology, or theory of knowing,' section ii. to 'the agnoiology, or theory of ignorance,' section iii. to 'the ontology, or theory of being'; part i. of Spencer's *First Principles* to 'the unknowable,' part ii. to 'the knowable.' Before proceeding to the exposition of his system, the former writer thinks it necessary to prove that it is possible to know reality and to distinguish knowledge from ignorance; the latter to prove that we cannot know reality or the absolute, but only the relative and phenomenal. Gnosticism and agnosticism alike rest upon a theory of knowledge. Although, in the light of the Kantian 'criticism,' this view of the relation of the ontological to the epistemological problem came home to these later thinkers with a new clearness and conviction, it was a lesson which they might have learned from the independent movement of English philosophy.

(3) It is important to observe the precise sense in which English philosophy may be said to be dominated by the practical or ethical interest, as contrasted with the speculative or metaphysical interest which is the inspiration of Continental philosophy. It cannot be

rightly said that the English estimate of knowledge is utilitarian, although Bacon's insistence upon the utility of knowledge in his famous dicta that 'knowledge is power,' and that its end is 'the improvement of man's estate,' certainly suggest such an estimate. It is rather that the intellectual interest, as such, is subordinated to the moral, the theoretical to the practical; that the supreme interest is the conduct of life rather than what Locke calls 'the conduct of the understanding.' Perhaps the actual state of the case may be best brought out by comparing the English with the Greek estimate of the comparative values of theory and practice, of the life of thought and that of action. The Greeks always saw in philosophy the true 'way of life,' and the Socratic identification of virtue with knowledge was only the explicit statement of the conviction, which inspired all their philosophical activity, that without theoretic understanding the practice of virtue must be blind and uncertain. But the Greek admiration of 'theory' went further than this interpretation of virtue as the expression of knowledge. For Plato the life of ideal virtue is that of philosophic, as contrasted with civic excellence, and for Aristotle the entire life of practical activity and moral excellence is instrumental to the higher life of theoretic activity and intellectual excellence. The English mind is practical in the sense that for it the supremely important thing is action; and not only does it place action above thought, but it is apt to depreciate the practical importance of knowledge, and to conclude that the limitations of human knowledge point to practice rather than speculation as the real destiny of man, and that for the practical conduct of life, faith is a better guide than rational insight, and probability serves where certainty is not to be reached. The attitude thus described is not, of course, peculiar to English philosophy. It is the characteristic attitude of Kant, who in this as in other respects may be said to combine the qualities of English with those of Continental philosophy. As he refuses to leave the solid ground of experience, and repudiates the 'rational dogmatism'

of his predecessors; as he substitutes epistemology or the 'criticism' of knowledge for the old ontology and metaphysics, so he finds the ultimate clue to the nature of reality in the practical rather than in the speculative reason, in the ethical rather than in the intellectual interest. Even for Spinoza, with all his intellectualism, the moral and practical interest may be said to be supreme, since the great service which the intellectual vision of all things in the light of their divine unity and necessity renders to man is to free him from 'the bondage of the passions'; for Spinoza, as for Socrates, virtue is knowledge, and the supreme value of knowledge, in his eyes, is that it makes virtue possible. The peculiarity of the English view is that, depreciating the moral value of knowledge, at least of the speculative type, and insisting upon the necessity of supplementing the defects of knowledge by a faith or practical certainty which satisfies the needs of the moral life, it tends to diminish the ardour of the pursuit of truth, and is even apt to lead to the appeal to the ordinary practical understanding or the 'common sense' of mankind for the solution of purely speculative problems.

It is not surprising that the English contribution to ethical and political philosophy should be considerable both in amount and in importance. The course of political and constitutional history stimulated reflection upon the nature and functions of the State and the theoretic basis of that liberty of the subject which asserted itself more and more as the ideal of the national aspiration. The treatises of Hobbes and Locke, the one maintaining the absolute and inalienable character of the authority of the sovereign, the other insisting that government is a trust for the faithful discharge of which the holder may rightfully be called to account by the people who have committed it to him, are of epoch-making importance for political theory. The importance of Hobbes's *Leviathan* is not less for ethics than for politics. Proclaiming as it does the radical individualism, the inherent selfishness of human nature, it stimulated a succession of moralists to

the effort to establish the opposite view; the early intuitionists and the advocates of a 'moral sense' united in a common protest against what they regarded as the travesty of human nature offered by Hobbes. The most notable result of this effort is found in Butler's *Sermons on Human Nature*, which is, all in all, probably the most important contribution of the English mind to the theory of ethics. The union of the ethical and the political interest which is characteristic of Hobbes, but which falls into the background in his successors, again becomes prominent in the utilitarians of the nineteenth century.

The real beginning of English philosophy is to be dated from Bacon's break with Scholasticism. The Scholastic philosophy was not national; it represents the common intellectual effort of Christian Europe. As Professor Sorley says, 'The English language may be said to have become for the first time the vehicle of philosophical literature by the publication of Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, in 1605. . . . National characteristics are never so strongly marked in science and philosophy as in other branches of literature, and their influence takes longer in making itself felt. The English birth or residence of a mediæval philosopher is of little more than biographical interest: it would be vain to trace its influence on the ideas or style of his work. With the Latin language went community of audience, of culture and of topics. This traditional commonwealth of thought was weakened by the forces which issued in the renascence; and, among these forces, the increased consciousness of nationality led, gradually, to greater differentiation in national types of culture and to the use of the national language even for subjects which appealed chiefly, or only, to the community of learned men. However much he may have preferred the Latin tongue as the vehicle of his philosophy, Bacon's own action made him a leader of this movement; and it so happened that the type of thought which he expounded

had affinities with the practical and positive achievements of the English mind.'[1]

On the other hand, it has been suggested by Croom Robertson that the beginnings of English philosophy are to be sought within the Scholastic period. 'No nation has kept more steadily to its line of thought . . . but, also, none perhaps has thought so persistently. We seem to have had a line before any other modern people. . . . In gauging, historically, the philosophical performance of the English mind, those who rate it low and those who rate it high err alike, as it seems to me, in contracting the vision too much. Always it is presumed that the first note was struck by the famous Chancellor less than three centuries ago . . . that before Bacon there was no philosophical thought in England, or none at least that could be called English.' It is forgotten 'how actively the English or British intellect was at work in an age long before Bacon and towards a result which he and his followers are commonly thought to have been the first to conceive.' 'Men of our race played a part of quite singular prominence in the general intellectual movement of Europe. . . . Almost might one say that as long as the movement, from taking place within the fold of the universal Church, was in the strict sense a collectively European one, the start at every new stage of the course was due to the initiative of a British schoolman.'[2] In proof of his contention, Robertson cites the names of John Scotus Erigena in the ninth century, John of Salisbury in the twelfth, Alexander of Hales and Roger Bacon in the thirteenth, and Duns Scotus and William of Ockham in the fourteenth. Of these names, however, the only ones which can be said really to represent the characteristic trend of later English philosophy are those of Roger Bacon and William of Ockham, the experientialism of the former and the nominalism of the latter heralding the dawn of modern philosophy, and anticipating,

[1] 'The Beginnings of English Philosophy,' *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. iv., ch. xiv. p. 268.
[2] *Philosophical Remains*, p. 28 ff.

along one of its main lines, the tendency of later English thought.

'It is more than probable,' says the late Professor Adamson, 'that in all fairness, when we speak of the Baconian reform of science, we should refer to the forgotten monk of the thirteenth century rather than to the brilliant and famous Chancellor of the seventeenth.'[1] 'He had the same thought, the same ambition; he conceived the same enterprise with the same courage and less glory,' says Rémusat.[2] That enterprise was the reform of philosophy by the substitution of the appeal to experience for the method of argumentation from premises accepted on authority. Like the later Bacon, he begins his plea for reform by an enumeration of the chief causes of error, or *offendicula*. Of such *pestiferae causae* he distinguishes four kinds—authority, custom, the opinion of the unskilled many, and the concealment of real ignorance with the show or pretence of knowledge. Of these the first and the last are the objects of his special denunciation, and he finds them combined in the attitude of Scholastic philosophy to its sources. Apart even from its roots in authority, however, he condemns the Scholastic method of argumentation as a medium of truth. Experience alone certifies or verifies the results of argument. 'If we wish to have complete and thoroughly verified knowledge, we must proceed by the methods of experimental science.' This last is 'the mistress of all the sciences and the end of all speculation' (*domina omnium scientiarum et finis totius speculationis*). But while he thus regards experience as the indispensable verification of truth reached by deductive reasoning, Bacon insists upon the value of the latter method in its own place. In particular he emphasises the importance of mathematics, which he calls 'the alphabet of philosophy.' 'Physicists ought to know that their science is powerless unless they call in the aid of mathematics.' In this recognition of the necessity of combining

[1] *Roger Bacon: the Philosophy of Science in the Middle Ages*, p. 7.
[2] *Histoire de la Philosophie en Angleterre*, i. 43.

deduction with induction, and especially in his appreciation of the scientific value of mathematics, Roger Bacon shows a deeper insight into scientific method than the author of the *Novum Organum*. 'In wealth of words, in brilliancy of imagination, Francis Bacon was immeasurably superior. But Roger Bacon had the sounder estimate and the firmer grasp of that combination of deductive with inductive method which marks the scientific discoverer.'[1]

Like Francis Bacon, this remarkable thinker of the thirteenth century rates the practical value of knowledge above its theoretical value. 'He belongs to the order of thinkers, typified by Pythagoras rather than by Aristotle, who engage in speculation, not for its own sake alone, but for social or ethical results that are to follow.'[2] Moral philosophy is for him the science to which all the others lead up. Yet here also he balances with fine perception the two sides of the case. 'Theory is useless without practice, and practice blind without theory.' Throughout the *Opus Majus* we cannot but see that, in spite of his denunciations of Scholasticism, he is deeply interested in the theological and religious ideas of his age; and although the demand for a reform of philosophical method and the profound interest in natural science which this work displays might lead us to infer that its author had no interest in the characteristic problems of Scholastic philosophy, the account which a French writer has given of the contents of his many unpublished manuscripts[3] makes it clear that the great controversy regarding the nature of universals fascinated him hardly less than his contemporaries, and that, as Mr. Bridges says, 'we shall best understand Bacon's life and work by regarding him as a progressive schoolman.'[4] It is all the more surprising that he should have been so far ahead of his time in his appreciation of the scientific aspect of knowledge, and should have not merely anticipated but

[1] J. H. Bridges, Introd. to *Opus Majus*, p. xci.
[2] Bridges, *loc. cit.*
[3] Charles, *Roger Bacon, sa vie et sa philosophie.*
[4] Bridges, Introd. p. xcii.

excelled Francis Bacon in his interpretation of scientific method.

Of William of Ockham it has been said by a careful student of his works that 'he was the great English schoolman, and his nationality appears everywhere in his writings and actions, distinguishing him from the other leaders of mediæval thought. . . . We see in William of Ockham some of the best features of the English character.'[1] Hauréau, the historian of Scholastic philosophy, affirms that 'it is in reality upon the soil so well prepared by the prince of nominalists that Francis Bacon built his eternal monument.'[2] He carries further, in the fourteenth century, that divergence from the essential principles of Scholasticism which Roger Bacon had inaugurated in the thirteenth. He so widens the breach between faith and knowledge as to constitute an irreconcilable dualism between these two spheres; and by his criticism of realism he undermines the Scholastic method of abstract reasoning, and prepares the way for the modern scientific method—the inductive investigation of the concrete facts of experience.

Going further than any preceding Scholastic philosopher in separating the spheres of theological and philosophical truth, Ockham maintains that none of the truths of theology can be proved philosophically, that in seeking to prove even the existence of God we are involved in insoluble contradiction. It is difficult to determine whether his zeal in thus separating the things of faith from the things of knowledge was the result of his concern for religious or for scientific truth. The probability is that he shared the tendency to religious mysticism which was characteristic of the Franciscan Order, of which he was a zealous member, and that his depreciation of theology as a science is intended as an indirect defence of practical religion. The actual result of his teaching, however, was in the main destructive, lending force to the growing

[1] T. M. Lindsay, *British Quarterly Review*, vol. lvi. p. 3.
[2] *Histoire de la Philosophie Scolastique*, ii. 474.

tendency to adopt the doctrine of a 'twofold truth' which was fatal to the presupposition of Scholastic philosophy—the essential identity of the content of faith and that of knowledge. Nor can it be doubted that a part at least of Ockham's own interest in the distinction was the freedom of scientific inquiry which it promised and which constituted its positive significance for his successors in English philosophy. The later Bacon and Hobbes draw the same sharp and absolute line of distinction between the spheres of faith and knowledge, the only difference between these philosophers and William of Ockham being that the religious interest in the distinction which was apparently primary for him is in them entirely subordinated to the scientific interest in intellectual freedom. Probably it was the union in Ockham of these two interests, no less than his struggle against the papal authority, that appealed so powerfully to Luther, who spoke of William as 'mein lieber Meister Ockham.'

But it is as the 'renewer of nominalism' that Ockham is best known in the history of philosophy. The doctrine of realism, variously modified, had finally established itself as the orthodox doctrine of Scholastic philosophy. The victory of nominalism which marked the close of the Scholastic age was the result of the persistence with which Ockham urged the claims of a theory of knowledge and reality which lay nearer to experience than that which underlay the doctrine of realism, and at the same time recognised and reinterpreted the truth which that doctrine contained but had never succeeded in expressing. The knowledge of existence is always, Ockham contends, intuitive, never abstract or conceptual; the real is always individual, never universal. The realists have abstracted the universal or common element from the individual things in which alone it really exists; they have hypostatised these abstract universals, and attributed to them a higher degree of reality than that possessed by the individual things whose properties they are. Ockham's fundamental principle is that 'plurality is not to be predicated without necessity' (*Non est ponenda pluralitas*

sine necessitate), that 'entities are not to be unnecessarily multiplied' (*Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*). To predicate the independent or substantive existence of the universal or conceptual is to postulate plurality without necessity. The concept is not *aliquid*, but *quoddam fictum*; the universal is only a 'term' or 'sign,' not a 'thing'; its 'existence' is only in the mind.

On the other hand, the new nominalism (or terminism) differs from the old in recognising the importance of the concept, and is therefore indistinguishable from the doctrine of conceptualism. The name or term is not without meaning or real significance; it is a 'sign' of reality, and has its warrant in the nature of reality. There are real likenesses or agreements between the individual things; they are not mere individuals. As Hauréau says, 'The universal notion has a real basis in the nature of things.'[1] The concept signifies several individuals, whose 'natural resemblance' makes it, though in itself particular, representative of them all. The discovery of these real likenesses, the investigation of the actual warrant in the nature of things for the representative function of the universal concept, is the work of science in the modern sense. It is in this sense that Ockham is, like Roger Bacon, a founder of English experientialism. Instead of reasoning down from universals, accepted on authority, he insists upon the necessity of generalising from experience, of such a study of the language of nature as shall discover to us the really significant universals or those which are truly representative of the actual nature of things. It is a doctrine which we find restated in somewhat modified forms by Hobbes and Berkeley, as well as by Bacon; but none of these later statements of the doctrine is equal to that of Ockham in adequacy and discrimination.

[1] *Op. cit.*, ii. 467.

PART I

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The first task of philosophy in the seventeenth century was to differentiate itself from theology, to assert the freedom of the scientific intellect from the bondage of authority, and to determine the proper method of this independent investigation of the nature of reality. Modern philosophy originates in a change of the centre of interest from God and the supernatural to nature and the interests of the secular life. Preoccupied with the problem of the differentiation of science from theology, philosophy is less interested in the question of its own differentiation from the sciences. It conceives its function as the determination of scientific method and the construction of the system of the sciences, rather than as the solution of a problem peculiar to itself and lying beyond the scope of the sciences even in their sum. It is Locke who first clearly differentiates and defines the peculiar problem of philosophy as the investigation of the nature and extent of human knowledge, the previous question left unanswered by all the special sciences. Bacon and Hobbes propose two very different answers to the question of scientific method; and while the former never really gets beyond the question of method, the latter proceeds to the construction of a general metaphysical theory which, like his theory of ethics, proved to be of great importance in stimulating others, within his own century as well as later, to speculation on the possibilities of a more adequate solution of the problem. Bacon contended for the substitution of an inductive and experiential for the

deductive and dialectical method of Scholastic philosophy. In his eyes a 'natural history' or a complete induction of the facts was the only sufficient basis of true scientific explanation; and, in spite of his strenuous polemic against Scholasticism, he was enough of a Scholastic to believe in the existence of a fixed number of fundamental 'forms' or species, and to regard the function of science as the discovery of these 'forms.' Hobbes, on the other hand, held that the essential feature of scientific explanation was rational demonstration, and found himself forced to conclude, as the result of such demonstration, that matter alone was real. The Cambridge Platonists, who sought to refute the materialism of Hobbes, were even more consistently rationalistic in their method than Hobbes himself, and endeavoured to demonstrate, after Plato, the spiritual constitution of reality.

Locke followed Bacon in insisting upon the necessity of adopting what he called 'the historical plain method,' which, as applied to the facts of the human understanding, is the psychological or introspective method. His chief significance lies, however, as already pointed out, in his new statement of the problem of philosophy as that of the nature and extent of human knowledge and the difference between knowledge and opinion or belief. Both Bacon and Hobbes had affirmed the distinction, in the interest rather of scientific freedom than in that of revealed religion; but neither had offered a reasoned account of its nature and validity. Locke's supreme concern is for the interests of the moral and religious life, and the exigencies of his theory of knowledge lead directly to the formulation of the distinction in question—'our knowledge being short, we want something else.' The significance of Locke's new question is not limited to his own century or to English philosophy; henceforth its paramount importance is matter of common acknowledgment.

The necessity of differentiating ethics, as well as science and metaphysics, from theology was forced upon the modern mind by the dissolution of the politico-ecclesi-

astical system of the Middle Ages. The assertion of the independent authority of the State raised the question of the basis of its authority and the grounds of political obedience, and recourse was had to the Stoic conception of a 'law of nature' which had been adopted by the Roman jurists. The interpretation of this conception occupied the energies of the moral and political philosophy of the seventeenth century. The anxieties of the political situation in England, the rising tide of anarchy and revolution, forced upon Hobbes the question of the nature and seat of sovereign authority; and in his eagerness to secure the stability of the State he could see no alternative to political absolutism, a doctrine which Locke set himself to refute. Hobbes laid the foundation of this political theory in a doctrine of ethical relativism and egoism which shocked the moral sense of his contemporaries, and led to the effort of the ethical rationalists to substitute for it the doctrine of the absoluteness of moral laws as expressions of the rational constitution of the universe and obligatory upon all men as rational beings. Thus the alternative between a virtually utilitarian and an intuitional theory of ethics is clearly stated, and the issue between the two views fairly joined, before the close of the century.

CHAPTER I

BACON: PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENTIFIC METHOD

In no other case in the history of philosophy is it so difficult, as perhaps in no other case is it more important, to determine the relation between the philosopher and the man. To most of his biographers the character of Bacon has presented a hopeless paradox and dualism, which has served as a text to point the familiar moral that the highest gifts may be turned to the basest uses and the best insight blinded by worldliness and selfishness of motive, that the corruption of the best is the worst. The most superficial interpretation of the tragedy of his career is that offered by Macaulay in his famous essay. To him it is simply the exhibition, on a great scale, of the disparateness of intellectual and moral greatness, of the falseness of the Socratic maxim that virtue is knowledge. Bacon, that is to say, lived two totally disconnected lives, the intellectual and the moral; the temptations which beset him in the latter could not possibly arise in the former, nor could the high ideals of the philosopher avail the politician or the man. Such a dualism between the intellectual and the practical life is repudiated by Kuno Fischer, who was the first to insist on the unity of Bacon's character in the two spheres. But Kuno Fischer himself reasserts the antithesis in a new form. According to his view, it is to the extreme intellectualism of Bacon's temperament, to his lack of emotional depth, his poverty of natural human affection, the dispassionateness of his nature, that we must trace at once his splendid intellectual achievement and the defects of his moral and

political life. His moral shortcomings are the defects of his intellectual qualities; it is because he was a great thinker that he was not a great man. Even so careful a writer as R. W. Church, solicitous as he was to do complete justice to the character of Bacon as a statesman, allows the dualism and contradiction to remain, and sees in his political career nothing more than the effort to provide himself with the wherewithal to pursue the higher ends of the intellectual life, and even the constant temptation to abandon the life of the student of nature for that of the self-seeking man of affairs. In that political activity which formed so large a part of Bacon's life, he recognises only 'the distraction of his mind between the noble work on which his soul was bent, and the necessities of that "civil" or professional and political life by which he had to maintain his estate.'[1] Yet he admits that Bacon's political life had its own worthy ideals and aspirations, no less than his intellectual life. 'So ended a career, than which no other in his time had grander and nobler aims, aims, however mistaken, for the greatness and good of England, aims for the enlargement of knowledge and truth, and for the benefit of mankind.'[2]

While we must admit that Bacon's true greatness is intellectual rather than moral, and that there is an element of truth in the view of the writers just mentioned, yet it is mechanical and superficial to separate the two lives completely from one another, and to see in the one simply the opposite and the negation of the other. In spite of what he himself may have said, in moments of professional and political disappointment, in disparagement of the busy life of the lawyer, statesman, and courtier, and the assertion of his true vocation as that of the seeker after truth, it is impossible to contemplate his entire career without concluding from it that his interest was no less practical and political than intellectual and theoretic; that philosophy was, if the nobler occupation, still only the occupation of his leisure; that, from first to last, he

[1] *Bacon*, in 'English Men of Letters,' p. 100. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 171

conceived his vocation to lie no less in the sphere of statesmanship than in that of philosophy. It would have been inconsistent with his practical and utilitarian estimate of knowledge to depreciate the work of the statesman, as he conceived it. If he regarded himself, in his study of nature, as the servant of mankind, as the discoverer of Nature's laws that he might subdue her activities to the uses of mankind and 'the relief of man's estate,' in his political activity he no less regarded himself as the servant of his country, discovering the path of her true and permanent well-being, and persuading, if he might, the king and parliament to follow that path. As Nichol says, 'There is no more flagrant freak of criticism than to treat his public life as that of one playing truant from his Academy or Porch. However he may have deceived himself, half of Bacon's heart was set on politics.'[1] 'His heart was as much set on establishing on a basis of slowly broadening rights the foundations of the Greater Britain of his dreams as on reading the riddles of the earth and sky.'[2] There is no warrant for ascribing his interest in politics to the gratification of selfish ambition; his aim was as essentially disinterested in the political as in the intellectual life: nor was his ability less conspicuous in the one case than in the other. 'Those abilities,' says William Rawley, 'which go single in other men . . . were all conjoined and met in him.' In him theoretic insight and practical sagacity were singularly combined; so far as the union of knowledge with ability to rule is concerned, he is the most remarkable case, at least in English history, of the realisation of Plato's dream of the philosopher-statesman. He realises at the same time his own ideal of the true philosopher of the modern type, who differs from his ancient and mediæval prototypes in being not a recluse, whether of the academic or of the monastic sort, but a man of affairs, an active citizen.

Nor is there historic warrant for the undiscriminating

[1] *Bacon*, in 'Philosophical Classics,' vol. i. p. 3. [2] *Ibid.* i. 68.

condemnation which has so often been passed upon Bacon's career as a statesman. As Gardiner has said, 'No one to whom the history of that half-century [the half-century following the period of Bacon's political activity] is present can agree with those numerous writers who speak of Bacon's political work as inferior to his scientific.'[1] The primary cause of his failure as a statesman is to be sought rather in the conditions which beset his political activity than in essential defects either of insight or of character. 'An intellectual unity,' says the same writer, 'pervades the whole of the advice which he gave. He may sometimes have held his tongue when he knew that his counsel would be disregarded, but he never prophesied smooth things to suit the wishes of those by whom his counsel was required.' The truth is that he was too much in advance of his time on all the deeper questions of statesmanship to get the ear either of the sovereign or of parliament, or even to convince his colleagues in authority of the wisdom of his measures. Without fit instruments it is impossible for the ablest to achieve political success, and no statesman can command the instruments. Even the worse than questionable methods to which he had recourse in his endeavours to compass his political ends were, to a considerable extent, dictated to him by the conditions of his activity. As Gardiner has pointed out, 'Bacon must look to achieve a statesman's ends by the means of a courtier.' And when we remember that the Court was that of Elizabeth and of James, we shall not be so ready to blame Bacon for the subserviency of his language or for the Machiavellism of his policy as those have been who have forgotten to make allowance for this limiting condition. Much which we should not tolerate in a statesman of our own day was practically inevitable in that age. Doubtless the lower tendencies of Bacon's moral nature, as they are revealed to us in the *Essays*, and still more nakedly in the *Commentarius Solutus*, to which he seems to have confided

[1] Art. 'Bacon,' *Dict. of Nat. Biog.*

his inmost thoughts and purposes, made it only too easy for him to fall in with the prevailing usages of public life. But, on the whole, his failure as a statesman must be set down rather to his lack of opportunity than to his unworthy use of the opportunity which he had.

Even the most damaging incident in his political career, his treatment of Essex, assumes a somewhat different aspect in the light of the dominant purpose of Bacon's life as a statesman. He himself tells us that his interest in Essex from the first was political rather than personal: it was his anticipation for him of a great public career that attached Bacon to Essex and, on Bacon's side at least, formed the basis of their friendship. 'I held at that time my lord to be the fittest instrument to do good to the State; and therefore I applied myself to him in a manner which I think happeneth rarely among men.' In acknowledging the Earl's gift of land, he thus carefully limits the extent of the obligation under which he considers himself to have come: 'My lord, I see I must be your homager and hold land of your gift; but do you know the manner of doing homage in law? Always it is with a saving of the faith to the king and his other lords; and therefore, my lord, I can be no more yours than I was, and it must be with the ancient savings. . . . I reckon myself as a common —and as much as is lawful to be enclosed of a common, so much your lordship shall be sure to have. . . . I confess I love some things much better than I love your lordship, as the queen's service, her quiet and contentment, her honour, her favour, the good of my country, and the like.' There could have been no clearer intimation that, if the personal interests of friendship should ever conflict with the higher claims of country and devotion to the Crown, the former must yield without reserve to the latter claims. That Bacon did his best to avert the fatal collision between Essex and Elizabeth by that 'faithful counsel' in which he saw one of the best fruits of a true friendship, is unquestionable. That, after the failure of his best efforts, he should subordinate what he regarded as the lower to what he regarded as the higher obligation, and should

remind his friend of 'the ancient savings,' was the only course consistent with his ideal of public duty.

His conduct in his judicial capacity is more difficult to explain or excuse. But the extent of his shortcomings here is to be carefully noted. The evidence seems to show that, while he fell in with the prevailing custom of receiving presents from suitors, both while their suits were pending and afterwards, and allowed himself to be influenced by the constantly reiterated solicitations of Buckingham, he never deliberately sold justice, or accepted a bribe. This is Gardiner's conclusion, even in view of the argument of Abbott and the special investigation of the single doubtful case by Heath. Why, then, it may be asked, did he plead guilty to the charges brought against him? The answer is to be found in the fact that 'he knew that a trial of this kind was a trial only in name.'[1] Bacon himself saw in the accusation the expression of a higher ideal of justice than that which had guided previous judicial practice, and there seems no good reason for refusing to accept his own characterisation of it: 'I was the justest judge that was in England these fifty years; but it was the justest censure in parliament that was these two hundred years.'

Yet in Bacon's conduct as a judge, as well as in his treatment of Essex, there is revealed that 'poverty of moral feeling,' as Gardiner describes it, which is, in part at least, the secret of the tragedy of his public life, and in which we must find the explanation of his moral failure. How otherwise are we to explain his incapacity to realise the gravity of the sentence, the finality of his degradation in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen? How otherwise can we understand the apparent absence of regret, or even of reluctance, in his prosecution of Essex, nay, his superfluous eagerness to bring about the ruin of his friend? It is here that Kuno Fischer's insistence upon Bacon's lack of warm human affection, what Gardiner calls 'the extraordinarily unemotional character of Bacon's mind,' or what we

[1] Church, *Bacon*, in 'English Men of Letters,' p. 147.

may perhaps describe as his moral superficiality, becomes important as a factor in the explanation of his conduct. The whole passion of his nature seems to have exhausted itself in the pursuit of knowledge, on the one hand, and of the good of his country, on the other. To these two great ends all more personal ends and interests were ruthlessly subordinated, and the subordination does not appear to have cost him any struggle. It was, of course, only in the pursuit of the latter or political end that any real conflict was liable to occur, and in his devotion to this end Bacon seems to have been unscrupulous in the choice of means. Political failure was his lot, even on these terms; but it had been better to have failed by reason of a greater regard for moral considerations than to have purchased the possibility of political success at such a moral sacrifice. His moral superficiality, his lack of moral sensitiveness, affects even his intellectual life and seriously narrows his vision of truth. He tells us that 'the human understanding is no dry light, but receives an infusion from the will and affections'; but his own defect seems rather to have been a lack of emotion and affection which made him incapable of appreciating the significance of these elements in human life. How otherwise are we to explain his lack of interest in the metaphysical problems raised by the religious life, the merely conventional character of his own religion, its lack of real significance for his life, his conception of poetry as merely 'feigned history,' or the mean prudentialism of so many of his maxims of conduct in the *Essays*? But if his moral superficiality affects his intellectual as well as his practical life, it at the same time enables us to understand how he is greater in the former than in the latter sphere. And it is with his intellectual achievement that we are here concerned.

Whatever may have been the nature and the limits of his political ambition, Bacon's intellectual ambition was simply limitless. 'I have taken all knowledge for my province,' was an exaggerated statement of his function and vocation in the intellectual field, but a literal defini-

tion of that function and vocation as he himself conceived it. He regarded himself as the inaugurator of a new era in philosophy, the founder of a new philosophy, destined to supersede that of Aristotle, which had dominated the thought of the Middle Ages. He trusted the judgment of posterity to authenticate a claim too proud to be acceptable to the men of his own age. Nor was his confidence misplaced. The judgment of history has awarded to Bacon, along with Descartes, the position of founder of modern philosophy. If it has not confirmed his condemnation of Aristotle and of ancient Greek philosophy, but has rather seen in the new philosophy a return to the point of view of the old, a revival of the Greek spirit of free and independent inquiry, it has yet recognised in the fearless repudiation of authority which is common to Bacon and Descartes the decisive break with Scholasticism and Mediævalism, and in Bacon's proclamation of experience as the only source, and of Induction as the only fruitful method of knowledge, the watchword of modern science and philosophy, as distinguished from Greek speculation, on the one hand, and from Scholastic dogmatism and disputation, on the other.

The new departure of Bacon in philosophy thus takes its place in the wider movement of the Renaissance ; it is the intellectual expression of that movement. The earlier Renaissance, of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, had been humanistic ; its interest was in literature and art. The later Renaissance, of the sixteenth century, of which Bacon is the immediate product and expositor, was naturalistic ; its predominant interest was in science, or the interpretation of nature. The results of this new direction of attention, especially in astronomy, were of the most remarkable character. The Copernican theory changed the centre of man's world from his own planet to the sun round which it revolved. The discovery of America, which resulted from the scientific study of the earth and the application of science to navigation, extended the horizon of English enterprise. Magnetic investigations suggested new possibilities in physical science,

while Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood was epoch-making for the science of physiology and the art of medicine.

What chiefly impressed Bacon was the fruitfulness of the new knowledge in its applications to human life. No less than a revolution in the conditions of life, he feels, has been brought about by the scientific activities of the time; man is rapidly becoming the master and ruler of nature. The splendid fruits of the new knowledge stimulated him to the great ambition of universalising this dominion of man over nature. He felt that it would be unworthy of the new age in which he was living to be content with anything short of man's complete sovereignty. 'For this great building of the world has been in our age wonderfully opened and thorough-lighted . . . in respect of our sea-voyages, by which the whole globe of the earth has, after the manner of the heavenly bodies, been many times compassed and circumnavigated. . . . And this proficiency in navigation and discovery may plant also great expectation of the further proficience and augmentation of the sciences. . . . For so the prophet Daniel, in speaking of the latter times, foretells "that many shall go to and fro on the earth, and knowledge shall be increased," as if the opening and thorough passage of the world, and the increase of knowledge, were appointed to be in the same age.'[1] Why should we not 'make the mind of man by help of art a match for the nature of things?' The true philosophy is the *Ars inveniendi*, the method at once of discovery and invention, a science of Nature which shall teach man how to master Nature and compel her to serve his purposes. For the secret of this mastery is that obedience which is itself the result of knowledge. 'Nature is not conquered except by obedience.' Man must be the servant of Nature if he would be her lord. Art is but nature understood, and utilised for human ends. 'Human knowledge and human power meet in one.' What the antiquated 'Magic' of the

[1] *De Aug. Sci.*, Bk. ii. ch. x.

Middle Ages professed to accomplish by virtue of a mysterious and supernatural craft is in truth the result of insight into the nature of things, their natural qualities and behaviour. It is only our ignorance of Nature, our foolish effort to compel her to act unnaturally, that limits our power over her. But to know or understand nature, we must observe the facts: experience is here our only guide. The secret of modern discovery and invention is found in the new attitude of man to nature, in the substitution of observation and experiment, that is, of induction, for mere argument and conception, or the deductive method of the schools. Real, as distinguished from nominal or verbal, fruitful as distinguished from fruitless knowledge, is possible only on these terms.

This conception of the end and method of knowledge is opposed by Bacon as the new philosophy to the old philosophy of the Greek and mediæval schools; and since Aristotle was 'the philosopher' of the Middle Ages, he especially opposes it to the philosophy of Aristotle. We may therefore come at a better understanding of the Baconian view of knowledge by contrasting it, under his own guidance, with the Aristotelian view. And first, as regards the end of knowledge, or the relation of theory to practice, Bacon seems to dissent entirely from the doctrine of Aristotle. According to Aristotle, theoretic insight was not a means to practical ends, but itself the supreme end of human life: in speculation or contemplation of truth lies man's supreme good. According to Bacon, as we have seen, the end of knowledge is 'the relief of man's estate'; its value lies in the mastery over nature, the 'power' which it secures to man. The justification of science is found by him in its fruits or practical applications. Referring to the Pythagorean parable that the best life was not that of the buyers and sellers, or even of the competitors, at the Olympian games, but that of the spectators, he says: 'But men must know that in this theatre of man's life, it is reserved only for God and Angels to be lookers on. . . . For mere contemplation which should be finished in itself without

casting beams of heat and light upon society, assuredly divinity knows it not.'[1] It is in its practical utility that he finds the value of knowledge. Learning 'is not like a lark, which can mount and sing and please itself and nothing else; . . . it rather partakes of the nature of a hawk, which can soar aloft, and can also descend and strike upon its prey at pleasure.'[2] At the same time he distinguishes carefully between the superficial utilitarianism which is impatient for the fruits of knowledge and the patient temper which seeks primarily for light or insight, and is content to wait for the harvest of works to appear in its due season. 'For though it be true that I am principally in pursuit of works and the active department of the sciences, yet I wait for harvest-time, and do not attempt to mow the moss or to reap the green corn. For I well know that axioms once rightly discovered will carry whole troops of works along with them, and produce them, not here and there one, but in clusters. And that unreasonable and puerile hurry to snatch by way of earnest at the first works which come within reach, I utterly condemn and reject, as an Atalanta's apple that hinders the race.'[3] He accordingly signalises the superior importance of 'light-giving' (*lucifera*) to 'fruit-bearing' (*fructifera*) experiments, on the ground that the interests of the larger utility are better secured by the former than by the latter. It is only in a high and ultimate sense, as the instrument of man's sovereignty over nature, that a utilitarian estimate of knowledge can justly be attributed to Bacon.[4] Nay, while he cannot separate its practical fruits from knowledge, or conceive of a knowledge which should be without such fruits, while he regards contentment with the satisfaction of our intellectual curiosity as essentially selfish, he yet seems in the end to agree with the Aristotelian estimate of pure knowledge. 'And yet (to speak the whole truth), as the uses of light are infinite, in enabling us to walk, to ply our arts, to read, to recognise

[1] *De Aug. Sci.*, Bk. vii. ch. i.
[2] *Ibid.*, Bk. viii. ch. ii.
[3] *Nov. Org.*, Plan of the Work, p. 29.
[4] *Cf.* Windelband's *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, vol. i. p. 132.

one another; and nevertheless the very beholding of the light is itself a more excellent and a fairer thing than all the uses of it;—so assuredly the very contemplation of things, as they are, without superstition or imposture, error or confusion, is in itself more worthy than all the fruit of inventions.'[1] 'I am building in the human understanding a true model of the world, such as it is in fact, not such as a man's own reason would have it to be. . . . Truth therefore and utility are here the very same things; and works themselves are of greater value as pledges of truth than as contributing to the comforts of life.'[2] And in the famous Essay on Truth he says: 'Howsoever these things are thus in men's depraved affections, yet truth, which only doth judge itself, teacheth that the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it; the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it; and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature.'

Bacon represents his dissent from Aristotle regarding the method of knowledge as more radical than that regarding its end. For the deductive method of Aristotle he would substitute the inductive method; for the conceptual he would substitute the experiential, observational, and experimental method. The syllogism, he holds, is 'no match for the subtlety of nature.'[3] 'The syllogism consists of propositions, propositions consist of words, words are symbols of notions. Therefore if the notions themselves (which is the root of the matter) are confused and over-hastily abstracted from the facts, there can be no firmness in the superstructure. Our only hope therefore lies in a true induction.'[4] 'Men . . . must force themselves for awhile to lay their notions by and begin to familiarise themselves with facts.'[5] For 'there is no soundness in our notions, whether logical or physical. . . . All are fantastical and ill-defined.'[6] The

[1] *Nov. Org.*, Bk. i. Aph. 129.
[2] *Ibid.*, Bk. i. Aph. 124.
[3] *Ibid.*, Bk. i. Aph. 13.
[4] *Ibid.*, Bk. i. Aph. 14.
[5] *Ibid.*, Bk. i. Aph. 36.
[6] *Ibid.*, Bk. i. Aph. 15.

only valid notions are those which are derived from a careful study of the facts themselves. We must not 'anticipate' nature by reading our own preconceptions into the facts; we must be content to 'interpret' nature, we must allow her to dictate to us the conceptions which shall truly represent the facts. 'There are and can be only two ways of searching into and discovering truth. The one flies from the senses and particulars to the most general axioms, and from these principles, the truth of which it takes for settled and immovable, proceeds to judgment and to the discovery of middle axioms. And this way is now in fashion. The other derives axioms from the senses and particulars, rising by a gradual and unbroken ascent, so that it arrives at the most general axioms last of all. This is the true way, but as yet untried.'[1] The former is the method of disputation; all that it secures is consistency with the premisses. The latter is the method of discovery; if we would ascertain the actual nature of things, we must investigate the truth of the premisses, or rather we must patiently travel to the true principles or 'axioms' by an unprejudiced study of the facts. Instead of attempting to reason out the nature of things, we must be content to 'elicit reason from the facts by a just and methodical process' of interpretation. The futile and verbal disputation which results from the employment of the deductive method is illustrated by the 'degenerate learning' of the Schoolmen, 'who, having strong and sharp wits, and abundance of leisure, and small variety of reading; but their wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors (chiefly Aristotle their dictator) as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges; and knowing little history, either of nature or time; did out of no great quantity of matter, and infinite agitation of wit, spin out unto us those laborious webs of learning which are extant in their books. For the wit and mind of man, if it work upon matter, which is the contemplation of the creatures of

[1] *Nov. Org.*, Bk. i. Aph. 19.

God, worketh according to the stuff, and is limited thereby; but if it work upon itself, as the spider worketh his web, then it is endless, and brings forth indeed cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit.'[1]

Bacon is not to be understood, of course, as accusing either the Schoolmen or their master of following the purely deductive method, or evolving a philosophy of nature out of their own minds. What he does accuse them of is rash generalisation, hasty and unwarranted induction. They are too easily satisfied as to the truth of their premisses or axioms; their chief, though not their sole, interest is in the deduction of the consequences of these hastily accepted principles. It is not that the old philosophy was not based upon observation of the facts, but that the observation was not wide enough or varied enough, and that it was not supplemented by experiment. Nature must be examined and cross-examined; the interrogation must proceed by 'torture,' if it is to be successful. The true induction proceeds slowly and gradually in its generalisations. 'Then, and then only, may we hope well of the sciences, when in a just scale of ascent, and by successive steps not interrupted or broken, we rise from particulars to lesser axioms; and then to middle axioms, one above the other; and last of all to the most general. For the lowest axioms differ but slightly from bare experience, while the highest and most general (which we now have) are notional and abstract and without solidity. But the middle are the true and solid and living axioms, on which depend the affairs and fortunes of men. . . . The understanding must not therefore be supplied with wings, but rather hung with weights, to keep it from leaping and flying.'[2]

In their haste to arrive at general or 'first' principles, the Aristotelians have fallen into the error with which Bacon specially charges the opposite school, namely, the 'empirics,' that of an uncritical induction which proceeds

[1] *Advancement of Learning*, Works, iii. 285, 286.
[2] *Nov. Org.*, Bk. i. Aph. 104.

by 'simple enumeration' of the instances which appear to favour the conception or theory adopted, and fails to take account of the 'negative instances,' or those which, if they had been attended to, would have led to its rejection. For this 'childish' type of induction Bacon substitutes a critical induction which is on the outlook for cases which contradict the theory suggested by a superficial acquaintance with the facts. 'The induction which is to be available for the discovery and demonstration of sciences and arts, must analyse nature by proper rejections and exclusions; and then, after a sufficient number of negatives, come to a conclusion on the affirmative instances.'[1] It is only to such a careful scrutiny of the facts that experience will yield the secret of the nature of things. If the 'men of dogmas' or 'reasoners' 'resemble spiders, who make cobwebs out of their own substance,' the 'men of experiment' are 'like the ant: they only collect and use.' Bacon finds the analogue of the true method in the example of the bee, which 'takes a middle course; it gathers its material from the flowers of the garden and of the field, but transforms and digests it by a power of its own. Not unlike this is the true business of philosophy; for it neither relies solely or chiefly on the powers of the mind, nor does it take the matter which it gathers from natural history and mechanical experiments and lay it up in the memory whole, as it finds it; but lays it up in the understanding altered and digested. Therefore from a closer and purer league between these two faculties, the experimental and the rational (such as has never yet been made), much may be hoped.'[2] This reconciliation between a true rationalism and a true empiricism was clearly Bacon's ambition from the first, and the source of peculiar satisfaction when he finally accomplished it. In a letter to Burghley in 1592 he writes: 'If I could purge it [knowledge] of two sorts of rovers, whereof the one with frivolous disputations, confutations, and verbosities, the other with blind experi-

[1] *Nov Org.*, Bk. i. Aph. 105. [2] *Ibid.*, Bk. i. Aph. 95.

ments and auricular traditions and impostures, hath committed so many spoils, I hope I should bring in industrious observations and profitable inventions and discoveries—the best state of that province.' And in the Preface to the *Novum Organum* he says: 'I suppose that I have established for ever a true and lawful marriage between the empirical and the rational faculty, the unkind and ill-starred divorce of which has thrown into confusion all the affairs of the human family.'

The true method of knowledge is the Interpretation, the false method is the Anticipation of nature. We must derive our notions from the facts of experience, not deduce the facts from our preconceived notions. We must come to nature with an open mind, with the docility of the little child; for the kingdom of knowledge, like the kingdom of heaven, is entered only *sub persona infantis*. Instead of seeing in things the reflection of ourselves, and interpreting the world after the analogy of man, we must be content to let our minds reflect the nature of things, and to interpret them after the analogy of the universe. Bacon's conception of knowledge is that it is the copy or reproduction of reality; the mind—the sense and the intellect—is, or may become, a true mirror of things. The error, the distortion of reality, results from our refusal to observe with sufficient care, and to be content with the discovery of the order of things as that order is revealed to careful observation and experiment. 'All depends on keeping the eye steadily fixed on the facts of nature and so receiving their images simply as they are. For God forbid that we should give out a dream of our own imagination for a pattern of the world; rather may He graciously grant to us to write an apocalypse or true vision of the footsteps of the Creator imprinted on His creatures.'[1]

But there are certain defects in the mind as a mirror of the world, defects partly innate, partly adventitious.

[1] *Nov. Org.*, Plan of the Work, pp. 32, 33.

'The human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolours the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it.'[1] 'As an uneven mirror distorts the rays of objects according to its own figure and section, so the mind, when it receives impressions of objects through the sense, cannot be trusted to report them truly, but in forming its notions mixes up its own nature with the nature of things."[2] These false images, reflections of the mind itself, which, coming between the mind and reality, vitiate knowledge, Bacon calls 'Idols' (εἴδωλα), and he distinguishes four chief classes of them. First there are the Idols of the Tribe (*Idola Tribus*), which 'have their foundation in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men,' as, for example, the tendency to observe the instances favourable to any opinion we have adopted and to ignore those which are unfavourable to it, a tendency which explains the hold of superstitions upon the human mind as well as the unwarranted inductions of the Aristotelian philosophers; or the tendency to believe that things are as we wish them to be, rather than as they are. Secondly, there are the Idols of the Cave (*Idola Specus*), which 'take their rise in the peculiar constitution, mental or bodily, of each individual, and also in education, habit, and accident.' For example, 'some minds are stronger and apter to mark the differences of things, others to mark their resemblances'; some are dominated by the love of antiquity, others by the love of novelty; the bias of a special science or speculation affects its devotees. Thirdly, the Idols of the Market-place (*Idola Fori*) are 'the most troublesome of all: idols which have crept into the understanding through the alliances of words and names,' and are so called because they are formed by 'the intercourse and association of men with each other,' and which cause that acceptance of verbal fictions and confused notions which is characteristic of the vulgar understanding. Finally there are the Idols of the Theatre (*Idola Theatri*) which, like the Idols

[1] *Nov. Org.*, Bk. i. Aph. 41. [2] *Ibid.*, Plan of the Work, p. 27.

of the Market-place, are not innate, but are 'received into the mind from the play-books of philosophical systems and the perverted rules of demonstration.' 'These I call Idols of the Theatre, because in my judgment all the received systems are but so many stage-plays, representing worlds of their own creation after an unreal and scenic fashion.' They consist not only of wrong systems, but of wrong methods of philosophy; and from the latter point of view Bacon distinguishes three schools of philosophy, each of which is to be carefully guarded against by the mind that would discover the actual nature of things: the Rational or Sophistical, represented by Aristotle and the Schoolmen; the Empirical, based upon an uncritical and vague experience; and the Superstitious, which confuses theology with philosophy, and which he connects especially with the names of Pythagoras and Plato.

In spite, however, of Bacon's determination to approach Nature in the spirit of the little child, with a mind emptied of all preconceptions, and especially the preconceptions derived from the philosophy of Aristotle as interpreted by the Schoolmen, he remained to the end in subjection to one great 'Idol of the Theatre.' 'No part of his design is more definite,' says Nichol, 'than the determination, characteristic of his age, to break with the Past, although no part of it was more incompletely fulfilled.'[1] 'The position of Bacon' is in reality, as Fowler remarks, 'midway between Scholasticism, on one side, and Modern Philosophy and Science, on the other.'[2] This is especially true of that doctrine of 'Forms' which governs his entire procedure in the investigation of nature. Accepting without question Aristotle's classification of causes as material, efficient, formal and final, he assigns the investigation of the two former to Physics and that of the two latter to Metaphysics. The discovery of the material and efficient causes he regards as a mere preliminary to the discovery of the formal and final; the former are only the

[1] *Bacon*, in 'Philosophical Classics,' vol. ii. pp. 3, 4.
[2] Pref. to edition of *Nov. Org.*, p. vi.

phenomenal, the latter the real and essential aspect of the case. The Form is what differentiates one thing from others, that which makes it what it is, its essential and characteristic being. 'The Form of a thing' he says, 'is the very thing itself, and the thing differs from the form no otherwise than as the apparent differs from the real, or the external from the internal, or the thing in reference to man from the thing in reference to the universe.'[1] In this Form of the thing he sees the clue to the secret of its production. 'On a given body to generate and superinduce a new nature or new natures, is the work and aim of human power.'[2] Bacon warns us, however, not to confuse these ultimate 'forms' with the more obvious qualities which we are apt to regard as primary or essential. 'When I assign so prominent a part to Forms, I cannot too often warn and admonish men against applying what I say to those forms to which their thoughts and contemplations have hitherto been accustomed.'[3] The Form of Heat, for example, is found in something apparently quite different from Heat itself, namely, certain modes of motion. These Forms constitute the alphabet of nature, out of the manifold combinations of whose letters all the variety of its phenomena may be explained.

Bacon's ultimate category, it thus appears, is not cause but substance. He conceives the world as a statical combination of elements rather than as a development of effects from causes. The Natural History which investigates the causal sequence of the phenomena is only the preparation for the Natural Philosophy which traces the complexities of the apparent qualities to the few simple Forms or real differences which belong to the substance of things. Bacon's point of view is that of Scholastic realism, rather than that of modern science. We are not to be misled by his identification of the Form with the Law of the thing, as when he says that 'the Form of Heat or the Form of Light is the same thing as the Law of Heat or the Law of Light,'[4] or when he speaks

[1] *Nov. Org.*, Bk. ii. Aph. 13.
[2] *Ibid.*, Bk. ii. Aph. 1.
[3] *Ibid.*, Bk ii. Aph. 17.
[4] *Ibid.*, Bk. ii. Aph. 17.

of nature's 'fundamental and universal laws which constitute Forms,' or says that 'though in nature nothing really exists beside individual bodies, performing pure individual acts according to a fixed law, yet in philosophy this very law, and the investigation, discovery, and explanation of it, is the foundation as well of knowledge as of operation. And it is this law, with its clauses, that I mean when I speak of *Forms*.'[1] 'Law' is clearly used, in these passages, not in the modern scientific sense of a uniformity of causal sequence between phenomena or occurrences, but in the sense of a permanent and identical essence which is to be found beneath the apparent variety, a real simplicity beneath the apparent complexity of nature; the 'law' of the thing is the dictation of its 'form' or essence to its properties and accidents.

Bacon comes nearer to the point of view of modern science in his doctrines of 'latent schematism' and 'latent process,' in which he recognises the continuity of all phenomena and the molecular constitution of matter. By the 'latent schematism' he means the subtle and supra-sensible structure or configuration of the material particles; by the 'latent process,' the no less subtle steps by which the movement of those particles, or 'natures,' takes place. The chief interest of these conceptions lies in the recognition which they imply of the dynamical aspect of nature, so far as concrete things are concerned. They appear, however, almost like an interlude in the exposition of Bacon's serious doctrine; his real interest, it is clear, is in the abstract and formal aspect of reality, in the problem of substance rather than in that of cause.

It is in his elaboration of the methods of reducing the apparent complexity of nature to the simplicity of its fundamental Forms that Bacon makes his great contribution to the logic of induction. As Fowler says, 'Inductive Logic, that is, the systematic analysis and arrangement of inductive evidence, as distinct from the

[1] *Nov. Org.*, Bk. ii. Aph. 2.

natural induction which all men practise, is almost as much the invention of Bacon as Deductive Logic is that of Aristotle.'[1] The *filum labyrinthi* is found in the selection of instances according to a principle; without this clue we shall never succeed in differentiating the essential from the unessential elements. The first step is the preparation of a 'Natural and Experimental History, sufficient and good.' We must next construct 'Tables and Arrangements of Instances, in such a method and order that the understanding may be able to deal with them'; and finally we must interpret these instances by 'true and legitimate induction, which is the very key of interpretation.'[2]

Bacon formulates three inductive methods or, as he calls them, 'Tables of Presentation': the Table of Essence and Presence, the Table of Deviation or of Absence in Proximity, and the Table of Degrees or the Table of Comparison. They correspond closely with Mill's Methods of Agreement, of Difference, and of Concomitant Variations. The Table of Essence and Presence consists in 'a muster or presentation before the understanding of all known instances which agree in the same nature, though in substance the most unlike,' for example, the heat of the rays of the sun, of flame, and of animal bodies. The Table of Deviation, or of Absence in Proximity, consists of 'a presentation to the understanding of instances in which the given nature is wanting; because the Form . . . ought no less to be absent when the given nature is absent, than present when it is present. But to note all these would be endless. The negatives should therefore be subjoined to the affirmatives, and the absence of the given nature inquired of in those subjects only that are most akin to the others in which it is present and forthcoming.' Of this Table Bacon gives as examples the rays of the moon and of stars and comets, which 'are found not to be hot to the touch.' In the Table of Degrees or of Comparison 'we must make a presentation

[1] *Bacon*, in 'English Philosophers,' p. 91.
[2] *Nov. Org.*, Bk. ii. Aph. 10.

to the understanding of instances in which the nature under inquiry is found in different degrees, more or less; which must be done by making a comparison either of its increase and decrease in the same subject, or of its amount in different subjects, as compared one with another. For . . . no nature can be taken as the true form, unless it always decrease when the nature in question decreases, and in like manner always increase when the nature in question increases.' One of Bacon's examples of this Table is that 'the less the mass of a body, the sooner is it heated by the approach of a hot body; which shows that all heat of which we have experience is in some sort opposed to tangible matter.' In the use of these methods the common prerequisite is the adoption of a negative and critical attitude. 'If the mind attempt this affirmatively from the first, as when left to itself it is always wont to do, the result will be fancies and guesses and notions ill defined, and axioms that must be mended every day . . . To God, truly, the Giver and Architect of Forms, and it may be to the angels and higher intelligences, it belongs to have an affirmative knowledge of forms immediately, and from the first contemplation. But this assuredly is more than man can do, to whom it is granted only to proceed at first by negatives, and at last to end in affirmatives, after exclusion has been exhausted.'[1] This insistence upon the importance of taking account of the 'negative instances,' the substitution of a critical induction for the uncritical procedure 'by simple enumeration' of earlier scientific theory and practice, is, as we have seen, the distinctive and original feature of the Baconian method.

It is in this method that, as he himself knew, Bacon's real contribution to knowledge consists, and if we are to judge fairly of his work as a thinker, it is necessary to keep in mind this limitation of his intellectual ambition. Rémusat quotes Laplace's criticism that 'Bacon has given for the investigation of truth precept but not example.' Such a criticism, supported as it is by the

[1] *Nov. Org.*, Bk. ii. Aph. 15.

many instances of scientific error to be found in Bacon's works, is essentially unjust. As Kuno Fischer has said, 'According to the judgment of De Maistre, Bacon was not a scientific genius. Why? Because he made no discoveries himself, but only wrote on the art of making discoveries; because he was a theorist with respect to this art. We may as well reproach the writer on æsthetics for not being himself an artist.'[1] Bacon's own professions anticipate and answer all such criticism. 'I am but a trumpeter, not a combatant.' 'The endeavours and industry of a private man can be but as an image in a crossway, that may point at the way, but cannot go it.' 'I have provided the machine, but the stuff must be gathered from the facts of nature.'[2] Even as regards the finality of his method or 'machine,' his claims are not extreme. 'Nor do I mean to say that no improvement can be made upon these [rules of interpretation]. On the contrary, I that regard the mind not only in its own faculties, but in its connection with things, must needs hold that the art of discovery may advance as discoveries advance.'[3]

Still it is not to be questioned that Bacon made great claims for his method, and that he regarded it as in its essential features the final method of scientific investigation. He evidently thought that, by putting into men's hands this invaluable instrument, he had not only ensured the progress of man's knowledge, and therefore of his dominion over nature, but had once for all reduced men's intellectual abilities to a common level. What had hitherto depended upon the superior wit of the individual would depend henceforth only upon the patient and accurate use of an instrument which was equally available for all. 'The course I propose for the discovery of sciences is such as leaves but little to the acuteness and strength of wits, but places all wits and understandings nearly on a level.'[4] What are we to make of this tremendous claim? The only possible answer is that, apart

[1] *Bacon*, Eng. transl., p. 337 (1st ed.).
[2] *Nov. Org.*, Dedication.
[3] *Ibid.*, Bk. i. Aph. 130.
[4] *Ibid.*, Bk. i. Aph. 61.

altogether from the merits or demerits of his method, Bacon's enterprise was fundamentally mistaken and foredoomed to failure. It is futile to attempt to reduce the procedure of the scientific intellect to rules by following which every investigator will be practically on the same level. The facts do not suggest their own interpretation; the initiative always lies with the observing mind. Bacon himself accentuates the idea of 'interrogation,' as distinguished from 'anticipation' of nature; but he did not realise that our success in compelling nature to give us illuminating answers depends mainly upon our skill in framing the questions, that a good question is more than half the answer. *Hypotheses non fingo* was the great maxim of Bacon, no less than of Newton. But, as Mill's more adequate analysis of the method of scientific discovery has clearly shown, and as the history of science on every page confirms, it is in the framing and testing of likely hypotheses, and not in the accumulation of facts, that the work of science really consists. We must, in this sense, anticipate nature if we are ever to arrive at its true interpretation. The only explanation of Bacon's failure to see this, to us so obvious, element in scientific procedure is to be found in his preoccupation with the idea of the mind as the passive reflection of reality, in his revolt against the *a priori* or deductive and conceptual method of the Schoolmen, and in his determination to substitute for this a thoroughly empirical and inductive method, as well as in his horror of the unrestrained use of the imagination which characterised the nature-philosophies of the Italian Renaissance. It is these historical conditions of his thought, rather than any essential one-sidedness of Bacon as a thinker, that must be held responsible for the limitations which make his philosophy of science so unsatisfactory to us.

Bacon himself seems to have recognised the necessity of supplementing the use of his methods by some such activity of the scientific intellect as that which we call the employment of Hypothesis. While he protests against the futility of the procedure of the *Intellectus sibi permissus*,

he yet concedes the legitimacy of this independent activity, as likely to result in truth as well as error. 'Since truth will sooner come out from error than from confusion, I think it expedient that the understanding should have permission (*ut fiat permissio intellectus*), after the three Tables of First Presentation . . . have been made and weighed, to make an essay of the Interpretation of Nature in the affirmative way. . . . Which kind of tentative process I call the Indulgence of the Understanding (*permissionem intellectus*), or the Incomplete Interpretation (*interpretationem inchoatam*), or the First Vintage.'[1] Similarly, in the *De Augmentis*, he speaks of 'learned experience,' 'which is rather a sagacity and a kind of hunting by scent, than a science.'[2] Moreover, he constantly makes use of the method of Analogy, and, as Kuno Fischer remarks, 'in truth every analogy is an *anticipatio mentis*.' It has even been thought by some that Bacon lost confidence in his own methods as time passed, and he observed their failure to yield results; and there is a striking passage in one of his latest writings (the *Prodromi*) which seems to favour this view. He there admits the possibility of scientific discovery without the use of his Organum, or Rule of Interpretation, so long as we reject the Idols and apply ourselves to the first-hand interpretation of nature.[3] It is also significant that the fifth part of the 'great Instauration' was to consist of 'such things as I have myself discovered, proved, or added—not, however, according to the true rules and methods of interpretation, but by the ordinary use of the understanding in inquiring and discovering.' These truths, he remarks, 'will serve in the meantime for wayside inns, in which the mind may rest and refresh itself on its journey to more certain conclusions.'[4] Had he perceived the organic connection between these tentatively accepted truths and the methods of establishing scientific truth as such, Bacon would have succeeded in formulating the complete method of the interpretation of nature.

[1] *Nov. Org.*, Bk. ii. Aph. 20. [2] *De Aug.*, Bk. v. chap. ii.
[3] Works, ii. 691. [4] *Nov. Org.*, Plan of the Work, pp. 31, 32.

But, apart from the exaggerated importance which he ascribes to Method, Bacon's statement of the methods followed by science in testing the validity of the conceptions hypothetically accepted at the outset is seriously defective. As we have seen, the object of the entire process of exclusions is the discovery of the 'form' which constitutes the essence of the phenomenon under investigation; and the underlying assumption is that nature, truly understood, consists of a finite, and indeed of a comparatively small number of such essential forms, which together make up what he calls the 'alphabet of nature.' The validity of the process really depends upon the truth of the initial assumption as to the exhaustiveness of our knowledge of natural forms or species. No account is taken of what Mill calls the 'plurality of causes,' on the one hand, or of the possibility of reducing what seem ultimate principles to principles still more ultimate, on the other. As Ellis remarks, in his general introduction to the philosophical works of Bacon,[1] the 'alphabet of the universe' of which Bacon dreamed 'could at best be only an alphabet of the present state of knowledge.'

Bacon seems himself to have felt that his account of the Inductive Method, as it stood, was inadequate, for he intimates his intention to add an account of the several 'aids' (*adminicula*) of which it stands in need. The only one of these, however, which he works out is that of the 'prerogative instances,' that is, instances of the phenomenon under consideration which are specially instructive or suggestive to the investigator. Such examples are 'solitary,' 'migratory,' 'striking,' 'clandestine,' 'bordering,' and, most important of all, 'instances of the finger-post' or 'crucial instances.' It cannot, however, be said that what Bacon says under these heads adds substantially to his general statement of the methods; and the fact that he left the account of the 'aids' thus incomplete inevitably suggests the inference that, as time passed, he lost interest, if not confidence, in the methods themselves. 'His trust in the New Natural History,'

[1] Works, i. 39.

says Abbott, 'appears to increase in proportion to his distrust of the New Induction.'[1] In the Dedication of the *Phenomena of the Universe*, published in 1622, he tells us that 'a small and well-ordered Natural History is the key of all knowledge'; and in the Preface to the third part of the *Instauratio Magna* he says: 'It comes therefore to this, that my *Organum*, even if it were completed, would not without the *Natural History* much advance the Instauration of the sciences, whereas the *Natural History* without the *Organum* would advance it not a little.' But a collection of facts which is not informed by some anticipation of their theoretic significance can have little, if any, scientific value; here, as elsewhere, deductive and inductive reasoning, hypothesis and verification, must go together. If a true natural philosophy presupposes a wide and careful natural history, it is no less true that a natural history which is to serve as the basis of a natural philosophy itself presupposes a provisional natural philosophy or theory of the facts. A natural history which is not inspired by such a theoretic interest in the facts collected will prove a waste of labour, because its results will be irrelevant to the inquiry in question. In Bacon's own language, it is not in the 'mere enumeration' of facts, but in the discrimination of the relevant or significant from the irrelevant and, therefore, insignificant facts that the value of the natural history lies. It is not the mere number of the facts, but the selection of them, that determines their scientific value. Bacon's over-confidence in Natural History is only an added proof of the inadequacy of his conception of the method of science.

In two other notable respects Bacon showed a defective understanding of the scientific work which was actually being done in his own time—in his depreciation of the mathematical method and of specialisation in science. Galileo and Kepler were applying mathematics to the theory of astronomy; but Bacon, in his love for the experimental method and his suspicion of deductive

[1] *Francis Bacon*, p. 400.

reasoning, regards such an application of mathematics as a mere 'supplement' to the true science of astronomy. He speaks of specialisation like that of Gilbert (almost the only one of his contemporaries whom he mentions) as if it implied such a narrowness of outlook as disqualified those who practised it from taking a philosophical view of things, and he thinks Gilbert in danger of 'becoming a magnet.' In both these respects the subsequent course of scientific discovery has justified his contemporaries, and condemned Bacon.

The truth is, as we have already seen, that Bacon belonged as much to the Scholastic as to the modern age. His place is that of a transition-thinker, and this constitutes the importance of his work, while it at the same time limits the possibilities of his achievement. The terms which he constantly uses in speaking of material phenomena are specially significant of this intermediate position. He speaks of the 'appetites' and 'desires' of things, of 'appetites which aim at a private good' and 'appetites which aim at a more public good,' of 'bodies delighting in motion,' of 'spirits' where we should speak of 'forces.' With all his impatience of the 'superstitions' of the Schoolmen, he is himself too much of a Schoolman to abandon their characteristic modes of thought and speech. With all his scientific ardour, he is the author rather of an impressive statement, or series of statements, of the scientific ideal of his age than of the method of realising that ideal. The influence which he exerted on the scientific thought of his own and of succeeding ages was that rather of a prophet than of a teacher; he gave articulate expression to their own ideal, he did not really direct them in the realisation of that ideal. How great that influence was may be gathered from the fact that, as Fowler says, 'the foundation of the Royal Society in England, and possibly also that of similar societies on the Continent, was due to the impulse given by Bacon to the study of experimental science and the plans which he devised for its prosecution,'[1] and that in the words of

[1] Introd. to *Nov. Org.*, p. 116.

Lord Morley, 'the French Encyclopædia was the direct fruit of Bacon's magnificent conceptions.'[1]

Bacon's own interest was clearly more in Natural Philosophy, or physical science, than in Philosophy, as distinguished from Science—in the natural, as distinguished from the human sciences; yet his influence upon the actual progress of the human or philosophical sciences has been undoubtedly greater and more lasting than his influence upon natural science. His significance for the empirical movement of philosophical thought in his own country is especially remarkable. While the influence of Descartes is seen in the entire movement of Continental speculation, giving all the great thinkers a prevailingly rationalistic tendency, the influence of Bacon is no less clearly visible in the entire movement of English empiricism from Locke to Spencer. The spirit of the movement is the Baconian spirit of observation and experiment, of distrust in conceptions and 'innate ideas,' of a supreme regard for 'matters of fact,' of concern for the practical as well as the theoretic aspects of truth, and of comparative unconcern for, if not agnostic indifference to, the attainment of an ultimate metaphysical or theological synthesis. It is here, rather than even in the great impulse which he gave to the movement of modern science, that Bacon's work is really most important. It is here, even more definitely than in the sphere of physical science, that he is the inaugurator of a new era of human thought, in which the break with Scholasticism is most complete.

Bacon's interest in the ultimate questions of Metaphysics and Theology is rather to show that no answer to these questions can be reached by the unaided intellect of man, than to attempt either a Metaphysic or a Natural Theology in the usual sense of these terms. The 'key of his opposition to Descartes, who gets at Nature through God, and not at God through Nature,' is, as

[1] *Diderot*, vol. i. p. 116, quoted by Fowler, p. 77.

Nichol says,[1] his view that 'Nature presents itself to our understanding, as it were, by a direct ray of light, while God is revealed to us only by a reflected one.' We must not, however, press this figure, as if it meant that nature is the image or reflection of God, so that our knowledge of nature will be at the same time a knowledge of God. 'If any man shall think, by view and inquiry into these sensible and material things, to attain to any light for the revealing of the nature or will of God, he shall dangerously abuse himself. It is true that the contemplation of the creatures of God hath for end (as to the nature of the creatures themselves) knowledge, but as to the nature of God, no knowledge, but wonder; which is nothing else but contemplation broken off or losing itself.'[2] Even of the nature of man we can know nothing. 'The doctrine concerning the substance of the rational soul . . . must be handed over to religion to be determined and defined. . . . For since the substance of the soul in its creation was not extracted or produced out of the mass of heaven and earth, but was immediately inspired from God; and since the laws of heaven and earth are the proper subjects of philosophy; how can we expect to obtain from philosophy the knowledge of the substance of the rational soul? It must be drawn from the same divine inspiration, from which that substance first proceeded.'[3]

Bacon's criterion of knowledge being sensible verification, it follows that the reality or substance of nothing —human, cosmic, or divine—is knowable. His 'forms' are, after all, material qualities; and the investigation of these forms is the limit of human knowledge. Beyond the sphere of knowledge, in all spheres alike, lies that of faith. The very inadequacy of scientific knowledge demonstrates the necessity of faith. While Natural

[1] *Bacon*, in 'Philosophical Classics,' vol. ii. p. 128.

[2] Works, iii. 218. *Cf.* Works, iii. 267: 'The contemplation of God's creatures and works produceth (having regard to the works and creatures themselves) knowledge; but having regard to God, no perfect knowledge, but wonder, which is broken knowledge.'

[3] *De Aug.*, Bk. iv. ch. iii., Works, iv. 397, 398.

Philosophy is *certissima superstitionis medicina*, it is at the same time *religionis fidissima ancilla*.'[1] 'It is an assured truth and a conclusion of experience, that a little or superficial knowledge of philosophy may incline the mind of man to atheism, but a further proceeding therein doth bring the mind back again to religion; for in the entrance of philosophy, when the second causes, which are next unto the senses, do offer themselves to the mind of man, if it dwell and stay there, it may induce some oblivion of the highest cause; but when a man passeth on farther, and seeth the dependence of causes and the works of Providence; then, according to the allegory of the poets, he will easily believe that the highest link of Nature's chain must needs be tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair.'[2] If we would attain to that Divinity or Inspired Theology which is 'the haven and sabbath of all man's contemplations,' we must 'step out of the bark of human reason and enter into the ship of the Church; which is only able by the divine compass to rightly direct its course. Neither will the stars of philosophy, which have hitherto so nobly shone upon us, any longer supply their light; so that on this subject also it will be as well to keep silence.'[3] 'The articles and principles of religion are placed and exempted from examination of reason.'[4] 'The "placets" of God are removed from question.' Although Natural and Revealed Theology, as the 'sciences' of God, are placed alongside Physics and Metaphysics, as the sciences of Nature, the former are not strictly entitled, he holds, to the name of science. 'As for perfection or completeness in divinity, it is not to be sought; which makes this course of artificial divinity the more suspect. For he that will reduce a knowledge into an art, will make it round and uniform; but in divinity many things must be left abrupt.'[5] The

[1] *Nov. Org.*, Bk. i. Aph. 89.
[2] *Advancement of Learning*, Bk. i., Works, iii. 267, 268.
[3] *De Aug.*, Bk. ix. ch. i.
[4] *Advancement of Learning*, Bk. ii., Works, iii. 480.
[5] *Ibid.*, Works, iii. 484.

dualism between faith and reason is made as sharp and absolute as possible. 'The prerogative of God comprehends the whole man, extending to the reason as well as to the will; that man may deny himself entirely, and draw near unto God. Wherefore as we are bound to obey the divine law though we find a reluctation in our will, so are we to believe His word, though we find a reluctation in our reason. For if we believe only that which is agreeable to our sense, we give consent to the matter and not to the author, which is no more than we would do to a suspected witness. . . . The more discordant therefore and incredible the Divine mystery is, the more honour is shown to God in believing it, and the nobler is the victory of faith.'[1]

While the roots of this dualism and agnosticism are deep in his theory of knowledge, we cannot but feel that the enthusiasm with which Bacon proclaims the duty of man to submit his reason to the 'placets' of God, as interpreted by the Church, is due not so much to his concern for the truths of religion as to his zeal for the independence of science. Limited though its province is, yet within that province science is to be free from the bondage of ecclesiastical authority. His doctrine of the dualism of faith and reason is part of Bacon's general protest against the Scholastic confusion of theology and philosophy. He is more interested in assigning to reason the things of reason than in assigning to faith the things of faith. That this is the true interpretation of his position becomes still more clear when we take account of his comparatively slight interest in the ultimate questions of philosophy, the intensity of his interest in scientific truth, his hostility to 'superstition,' more especially that which he found in the Church of Rome, and his desire to limit rather than extend the civil power of the Church.

Bacon is less concerned for the independence of moral science, and quite content that it should be 'but a handmaid to religion,' 'admitted into the train of theology,

[1] *De Aug.*, Bk. ix. ch. i., Works, v. 111, 112.

as a wise servant and faithful handmaid to be ready at her beck to minister to her service and requirements.'[1] The duty of accepting without question the divine mysteries 'holds not only in those great mysteries which concern the Deity, the Creation, and the Redemption; but it pertains likewise to a more perfect interpretation of the moral law,' since 'it must be confessed that a great part of the moral law is higher than the light of nature can aspire to.'[2] It was left to Hobbes to complete the Baconian revolt against the Scholastic principle of authority, by extending it to the sphere of ethics as well as to that of metaphysics, and to attempt for the first time to construct an independent philosophy alike of nature and of man.

The impression which Bacon made upon his contemporaries is that which he still makes upon ourselves, of remarkable versatility combined with an equally remarkable gift of literary expression—'a man so rare in knowledge, of so many several kinds, endowed with the facility and felicity of expressing it all in so elegant, significant, so abundant, and yet so choice and ravishing a way of words, of metaphors, of allusions as perhaps the world hath not seen since it was a world.'[3] He 'fulfilled all numbers,' says Ben Jonson, and 'stood as the mark and ἀκμὴ of our language.' 'When we come to the *Advancement of Learning*,' says Church, 'we come to a book which is one of the landmarks of what high thought and rich imagination have made of the English language. It is the first book in English prose of secular interest; the first book which can claim a place beside the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.'[4] The literary side of Bacon's achievement is the more remarkable when we remember, on the one hand, his own lack of faith in the future of the language of Chaucer and Spenser and Shakespeare, and, on the other, his strict subordination of the form to the matter of his writing. 'These modern languages,'

[1] Works, v. 20. [2] Works, v. 112, 113. [3] Sir Toby Matthew
[4] *Bacon*, in 'English Men of Letters,' p. 217.

he writes to Sir Toby Matthew, 'will at one time or another play the bank-rowte with books, and since I have lost much time with this age, I would be glad to recover it with posterity.' In this conviction he either wrote all his greater works in Latin or afterwards translated them into that language. Of the *Advancement of Learning* alone he says: 'It is a book that will live, and be a citizen of the world, as English books are not.' On the other hand, he seems to have felt profoundly the new danger which beset the learning of his time from the tendency to set choiceness of phrase above exactness of thought and expression, 'that first distemper of learning, when men study words and not matter,' and think rather of 'the choiceness of the phrase . . . and the sweet falling of the clauses,' than of the sense. This new verbalism of the Renaissance writers was, in his eyes, no less fatal than the older verbalism of the Schoolmen; and he speaks of himself, on the contrary, 'as being one that accounted words to be subservient or ministerial to matter.' Yet he himself, it has been truly said, writes 'the finest English of the days when its tones were finest'; his prose is the prose of 'a man who had in himself all of the poet save the poet's heart'; his is 'a fancy among the masters of prose equalled by Plato alone.'

The literary form, which Bacon especially favours, lends itself to striking and picturesque expression. It is the Aphorism, which he prefers to 'methodical delivery' chiefly because it answers to the incompleteness of knowledge as he conceives it, but also from the unerring instinct of the literary artist that it is best calculated to arouse attention and create interest in what he has to say. 'Aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, do invite to enquire farther.'[1] Of this species of writing the great example is the *Essays*, or, as he describes them, 'dispersed meditations,' which, 'of all my other works, have been most current; for that, as it seems, they come home to men's businesse and bosomes.' Of the third edition he says that 'the Latin volume of them (being in the universal

[1] Works, iii. 405.

language) may last as long as books last.' Though they do not belong to Philosophy in the technical sense, they contain many philosophical reflections, as their Latin title indicates, 'Faithful Discourses, or the Inwards of Things.' They are the ripe fruit of Bacon's observation of men, and of his own varied experience; and, as Spedding remarks, he was 'deeper read in the phenomena of the human breast than in those of the material world.'[1] The style of this famous work is apt at first to disappoint the modern reader. The essays read more like notes or memoranda on their subjects than like finished discourses. 'Nothing,' says Church, 'can be more loose than the structure of the essays. There is no art, no style, almost, except in the political ones, no order; thoughts are put down and left unsupported, unproved, undeveloped.'[2] They are 'like chapters in Aristotle's *Ethics and Rhetoric* on virtues and characters.' Yet they are full of memorable sayings which have become current coin in the world of later culture. The very brevity of the statement and the sharpness of antithesis—the absence of elaboration—lend a piquancy to observations which in themselves are neither strikingly profound nor original. At every turn we are surprised by some happy analogy, some quaint illustration, some illuminating allusion, which springs from Bacon's 'incorrigible imaginativeness,' from the rare wealth of a fancy and wit that are classical rather than modern in their peculiar quality.

The ethical content of the *Essays* is apt to disappoint us no less than their style. They consist mainly of maxims for the conduct of life; but these maxims are, for the most part, rules by obeying which a man may become the 'architect of his fortune' or secure his advancement in life, they inculcate a prudential rather than an ideal morality. As Bacon puts it in another place,[3] 'We must strive with all possible endeavour to render the mind obedient to occasions and opportunities,

[1] Pref. to *New Atlantis*, Works, iii. 122.
[2] *Bacon*, in 'English Men of Letters,' p. 215.
[3] *De Aug.*, Bk. viii. ch. ii., Works, v. 70, 71.

and to be noways obstinate and refractory towards them. Nothing is more politic than to make the wheels of the mind concentric and voluble with the wheels of fortune.' The great occasions and opportunities are those offered by the characters and actions of our fellow-men; and human nature, like nature itself, is not conquered except by obedience. We must therefore study and watch our fellows, with the patience and perseverance of the Natural Philosopher, and with the same end in view, that of obtaining power and advantage, in the one case as in the other. The result is a Machiavellian policy: 'what Machiavelli meant for princes Bacon transfers to individuals.' In the higher teaching of the ethical books of the *De Augmentis*, however, Bacon insists that we must not make use of 'evil arts.' 'Men ought to be so far removed from devoting themselves to wicked arts of this nature, that rather . . . they ought to set before their eyes not only that general map of the world, "that all things are vanity and vexation of spirit," but also that more particular chart, namely, "that being without well-being is a curse, and the greater being the greater curse," and "that all virtue is most rewarded, and all wickedness most punished in itself."'[1] The entire tone and spirit of the teaching of this work is on a different level from that of the *Essays*, and it must be remembered that in it, and not in the *Essays*, we have Bacon's complete statement of his ethical views. 'Men ought so to procure serenity, as they destroy not magnanimity.'[2] 'Seek ye first the good things of the mind, and the rest will either be supplied, or their loss will not be felt.'[3] We hear again this higher note, which is not unheard in the *Essays* themselves, in the beautiful fragment of the *New Atlantis*, written in the last years of his life, in which he describes in language of tender admiration the life and manners of the distant city of his dreams, where they are 'in God's bosom, a land unknown.'

[1] Bk. viii. ch. ii., Works, v. 76.
[2] Bk. vii. ch. ii., Works, v. 14.
[3] Bk. viii. ch. ii., Works, v. 78.

CHAPTER II

HOBBES: MATERIALISM AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

While Hobbes may be regarded, from some points of view, as the successor of Bacon, he is, no less than Bacon himself, an independent and original thinker. His works bear no traces of Bacon's influence, and in fundamental points of philosophical theory he is directly opposed to the teaching of Bacon. The statement of the chief points of agreement and difference will bring us at once to the characteristic features of Hobbes's philosophy.

In the first place, Hobbes is in full agreement with Bacon as to the practical value of knowledge; it is indeed to him, rather than to Bacon, that we owe the dictum that 'knowledge is power.' 'The end of knowledge is power; and the use of theorems (which, among geometricians, serve for the finding out of properties) is for the construction of problems; and, lastly, the scope of all speculation is the performance of some action, or thing to be done.'[1] This practical or utilitarian interest in knowledge is the dominating motive of Hobbes's whole enterprise in philosophy. That enterprise embraces the entire field of human knowledge, so that he might well have said, with Bacon, that he had taken all knowledge for his province. But the end to which all else is a means is that scientific understanding of the ethical and political life of man in which Bacon too had seen the culmination of his scientific ambition, and the practical value of which seems to Hobbes least open to question. While the

[1] Works, i. 7.

utility of natural philosophy and geometry is measured by the arts which they make possible and the benefits which come to men through their possession, 'the utility of moral and civil philosophy is to be estimated, not so much by the commodities we have by knowing these sciences, as by the calamities we receive from not knowing them.' The greatest of calamities, or rather the cause of all avoidable calamity, is war, and the cause of war is not perversity of will, but intellectual blindness, ignorance of the rules of civil life, or of 'those duties which unite and keep men in peace.'[1]

Hobbes is, like Bacon, a herald of the new era, he is filled with the new spirit of Naturalism. For him, as for Bacon, the theological and supernatural world of the Scholastic philosophy has lost interest; nature and man, rather than God, are the objects of his inquiry. With regard to the knowledge of God he is as frankly agnostic as his predecessor. 'Curiosity, or love of the knowledge of causes, draws a man from the consideration of the effect, to seek the cause; and again, the cause of that cause; till of necessity he must come to this thought at last, that there is some cause, whereof there is no former cause, but is eternal; which is it men call God. So that it is impossible to make any profound inquiry into natural causes, without being inclined thereby to believe there is one God eternal; though they cannot have any idea of him in their minds, answerable to his nature. For as a man that is born blind, hearing men talk of warming themselves by the fire, and being brought to warm himself by the same, may easily conceive, and assure himself, there is somewhat there, which men call *fire*, and is the cause of the heat he feels; but cannot imagine what it is like; nor have an idea of it in his mind, such as they have that see it; so also by the visible things in this world, and their admirable order, a man may conceive there is a cause of them, which men call God; and yet not have an idea, or image of him in his mind.'[2]

[1] Works, i. 8.

[2] *Leviathan*, pt. i. ch. xi.

Here, however, Hobbes's quarrel with Scholasticism ends; it concerns the subject-matter, not the method, of that philosophy. He does not join in Bacon's protest against the Scholastic habit of anticipating nature, of deducing facts from theories; he has no thought of substituting a scientific induction for the deductive rationalism of Scholastic philosophy. So far as the question of method is concerned, he is the opponent rather of Bacon than of the Schoolmen; for him science, as such, is rationalistic or deductive, not empirical and inductive. Rational insight, not empirical knowledge, is his scientific ideal. That 'history' of which Bacon had made so much, he excludes from philosophy properly so called, 'because such knowledge is but experience, or authority, and not ratiocination.'[1] On the other hand, Hobbes sees in the method of geometry which Bacon has so inadequately appreciated the characteristic method of all truly scientific knowledge; and it is, therefore, in his, rather than in Bacon's, account of the method of science that we find the formulation of the actual procedure of modern science. In this faith in the method of mathematical demonstration Hobbes also reflects, far more truly than Bacon, the spirit of the century to which both belong, that spirit of which the *Ethica* of Spinoza, *more geometrico demonstrata*, is the most important philosophical product. In that 'experience' in which Bacon had seen the fountain of all knowledge he sees no true source of knowledge at all. 'Experience concludeth nothing universally.'[2] 'They that study natural philosophy study in vain, except they begin at geometry.'[3]

Hobbes accordingly defines Philosophy as 'such knowledge of effects or appearances as we acquire by true ratiocination from the knowledge we have first of their causes or generation; and again, of such causes or generations as may be from knowing first their effects.'[4] He distinguishes, therefore, two forms of ratiocination or

[1] Works, i. 10, 11.
[2] Works, iv. 18.
[3] Works, i. 73.
[4] Works, i. 3.

computation. 'To compute, is either to collect the sum of many things that are added together, or to know what remains when one thing is taken out of another. Ratiocination, therefore, is the same with addition and subtraction.'[1] These two methods are called by him the synthetical and the analytical, and correspond to the deductive and the inductive method respectively. The superiority of the deductive or synthetic to the inductive or analytic method follows from the nature of demonstration, as resting upon first principles embodied in definitions. While the particulars of sense are first for us, the universals are first in nature, and it is in the knowledge of these universals that all knowledge of causes must ultimately rest.[2]

A definition is explained by Hobbes to be the statement of the meaning of a name or term. A name is 'a word taken at pleasure to serve for a mark, which may raise in our mind a thought like to some thought we had before, and which being pronounced to others, may be to them a sign of what thought the speaker had, or had not before in his mind.'[3] From the stress which Hobbes lays upon the importance of language, primarily for ourselves, as securing permanence for the results of previous thought and, therefore, economy in the actual process of thinking, and more especially from the stress he lays upon the arbitrariness of language, it has been inferred that he denies, implicitly at least, the objective validity of scientific explanation, and reduces all philosophy to mere verbalism. But the arbitrariness of words or names does not imply the arbitrariness or subjectivity of the system of propositions of which they are the elements. The mark or sign, once chosen, is the symbol of the thing or of its qualities; and while, as Hobbes insists, initial agreement as to the use of such names is the condition of intellectual intercourse, the common use of the accepted symbols does not preclude those who use them from the apprehension of real relations, or of things as they are in themselves.

[1] *Loc. cit.* [2] *Cf.* Works, i. 70, 81. [3] Works, i. 16.

While he emphasises the necessity of sensation as providing the mind with the materials of knowledge, he is equally clear that knowledge itself is impossible without the constructive activity of the knowing mind. 'Reason is not, as sense and memory, born with us; nor gotten by experience only, as prudence is; but attained by industry. . . . And whereas sense and memory are but knowledge of fact, which is a thing past and irrevocable; *science* is the knowledge of consequences, and dependence of one fact upon another.'[1]

A further proof of the extreme view attributed to Hobbes as to the part played by words in our so-called knowledge is sometimes found in what Professor Taylor has called his 'ultra-nominalist position in logic.' There is no foundation, however, for such an interpretation of his position. We find no denial, explicit or implicit, of the reality of the common element which entitles the several individuals to be called by the same name; on the contrary, this community of nature is implied in what he says as to the applicability of the name, and especially in his account of the office of the copula in the proposition. The copula 'makes us think of the cause for which those names were imposed on that thing. As, for example, when we say a body is movable, though we conceive the same thing to be designed by both these names, yet our mind rests not there, but searches farther what it is to be a body, or to be movable, that is, wherein consists the difference between these and other things, for which these are so called, others not so called. They, therefore, that seek what it is *to be* anything, as to be movable, to be hot, etc., seek in things the causes of their names.'[2]

It may appear a more fundamental objection to Hobbes's account of the first principles of human knowledge that definition, or the clear formulation of the ultimate principles alike of knowledge and of reality, is rather the goal than the starting-point of scientific inquiry. But what Hobbes is really describing is not so much the actual starting-point

[1] *Lev.*, pt. i. ch. v. [2] Works, i. 31.

of the inquiry as the starting-point of a complete explanation, the ideal rather than the actual point of departure. If we are really to demonstrate anything, to know or understand it as the mathematician understands and demonstrates, the whole process of proof must be, as in geometry, a strict concatenation of the consequences which follow from certain initial conceptions. The analytic or inductive method must be superseded by the synthetic or deductive, and the latter method implies the apprehension of first principles, or ultimate causal points of view, from which we can see the entire chain of effects generated as a necessary result. Is not such a transfiguration of ordinary sense-experience, such a mathematical interpretation of reality, a truer account of the ideal which inspires the activity of modern science than the inductive investigation of the facts with which Bacon had identified it?

Yet all knowledge, according to Hobbes, begins in sensation. A 'thought' is but 'a representation or appearance, of some quality, or other accident of a body without us, which is commonly called an object. Which object worketh on the eyes, ears, and other parts of a man's body; and by diversity of working, produceth diversity of appearances. The original of them all, is that which we call sense, for there is no conception in a man's mind, which hath not at first, totally, or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of sense. The rest are derived from that original.'[1] It must be noted, however, that in the knowledge which we derive from sense, Hobbes includes the judgment by which we compare and distinguish sense-appearances. 'Sense, therefore, properly so called, must necessarily have in it a perpetual variety of phantasms, that they may be discerned one from another . . . it being almost all one for a man to be always sensible of one and the same thing, and not to be sensible at all of any thing.'[2]

The immediate objects of the senses are, Hobbes finds, mere 'phantasms' or 'appearances'—as we should say,

[1] *Lev.*, pt. i. ch. i.

[2] Works, i. 393–4.

states of consciousness, having no existence outside the mind itself. 'Light and colour, and heat and sound, and other qualities which are commonly called sensible, are not objects, but phantasms in the sentients.'[1] It follows that the object of sense-perception is purely subjective, and totally unlike the real object, which is the cause of the sense-appearance. This real object, or cause of the sense-appearance, is in every case motion. All sensible qualities are, 'in the object, that causeth them, but so many several motions of the matter, by which it presseth our organs diversely. Neither in us that are pressed, are they anything else but divers motions; for motion produceth nothing but motion.'[2] Hobbes's theory of knowledge, or 'logic,' as he calls it, thus results in the acceptance of motion, or matter in motion, as the sole reality; and this becomes the fundamental principle of his philosophy, which, so far as it conforms to his own ideal of synthetic or strictly ratiocinative explanation, is simply the result of the application of the principles of the new science of the time, the science of Kepler and Galileo and Harvey, to the whole of reality. Philosophy or metaphysics is only physical science universalised. The only real causes are mechanical; formal and final causes are fictions of the Scholastic imagination. We see the same influence of the current scientific conceptions and methods in the great Continental philosophies of the period, those of Descartes and Spinoza. The difference in the case of Hobbes is that the mechanical and materialistic point of view excludes the opposite, that of mind or spirit; for him mind *is* matter, thought *is* motion. Any other interpretation of reality or cause is for him simply inconceivable, because it is not scientific. 'The causes of universal things (of those, at least, that have any cause) are manifest of themselves, or (as they say commonly) known to nature; so that they need no method at all; for they have all but one universal cause, which is motion. . . . For though many cannot under-

[1] Works, i. 391, 392.

[2] *Lev.*, pt. i. ch. i.

stand till it be in some sort demonstrated to them, that all mutation consists in motion; yet this happens not from any obscurity in the thing itself (for it is not intelligible that anything can depart either from rest, or from the motion it has, except by motion), but either by having their natural discourse corrupted with former opinions received from their masters, or else for this, that they do not at all bend their mind to the enquiring out of truth.'[1]

All reality being conceived as material, Hobbes's scheme of philosophy falls into two main branches, Natural and Civil Philosophy, dealing respectively with natural and civil or artificial bodies. Civil Philosophy, again, consists of two parts, Ethics and Politics, the first dealing with man as the material of the State, the second with the State itself. Nature or Body as such, Man—the most important of bodies, especially as the nucleus of the State, —and the Citizen: these are the three great topics embraced in the universal scheme; and Hobbes's plan was to treat them in three successive works, *De Corpore*, *De Homine*, and *De Cive*. The exigencies of the political situation, however, as well as his own really predominating interest in the ethical and political parts of the inquiry, precipitated the writing and publication of the second and third parts before the completion of the first and fundamental division of his philosophy. It was not till 1655 that the *De Corpore* was published, while the *De Cive* was privately printed in 1642, as *Elementorum Philosophiae Sectio Tertia;* the *Human Nature*, published in 1650, had already been written in 1640, along with the *De Corpore Politico*, and entitled *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politique;* and *The Leviathan: or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil*, appeared in 1651. The *De Homine*, published in 1658, is the nominal completion of the scheme, but is really superfluous after the *Human Nature*, and is devoted rather to Physics than to Psychology.

[1] Works, i. 69, 70.

It is not a mere accident of the order in which the works were composed that the psychological and ethico-political treatises contain rather an independent and empirical account of the nature of man and the State than a deduction of the consequences of Hobbes's general philosophical principles when applied to the problems of psychology, ethics, and politics. Even in the *De Corpore* itself he finds it necessary, when he reaches, in Part iv., the subject of 'Physics, or the Phenomena of Nature,' to abandon the synthetic or deductive method which he had employed, more or less consistently, in the preceding parts. For the 'knowledge of effects acquired by true ratiocination' he now substitutes the method of 'finding out by the appearances or effects of nature which we know by sense, some ways and means by which they may be, I do not say they are, generated.'[1] It is still more obvious that, in the case of psychology and ethics, the immediate bases of civil or political philosophy, we must exchange the synthetic for the analytic method, and Hobbes is no less explicit in his admissions here. 'The causes of the motions of the mind are known, not only by ratiocination, but also by the experience of every man that takes the pains to observe those motions within himself.' It follows that even those who 'have not learned the first part of philosophy, namely, geometry and physics, may, notwithstanding, attain the principles of civil philosophy, by the analytical method.'[2]

Hobbes's psychology is limited in its scope and, we feel, to some extent biassed in its results, by the interest in which it is undertaken, namely, 'the finding out the first and most simple elements wherein the compositions of politic rules and laws are lastly resolved.'[3] Its main object is to establish the opposite view of human nature, and of the motives which guide its activities, to that which Aristotle had held and Grotius had recently restated in his *De Jure Belli et Pacis*. According to the latter view, man is naturally a social and political being,

[1] Works, i. 873. [2] Works, i. 73. [3] *Human Nature*, ch. xiii.

recognising the claims of others upon him and finding his own good in that of the community. Against this view Hobbes contends that man is by nature a mere individual, concerned only with his own good, which he is ready to defend against the competing claims of all other individuals. At the same time there is a great deal of sound psychological observation, especially in the *Human Nature*, which has little, if any, bearing upon this underlying polemical motive. The fundamental characteristic, alike of Nature and of man, Hobbes finds to be 'Endeavour,' or the tendency of a being to persist in its present condition, either of rest or of motion. Conscious endeavour is either appetite for that which helps, or aversion from that which hinders, 'the vital motion.' The objects which help vitality are called pleasant, those which hinder it, painful. While some appetites and aversions are congenital, all those whose objects are 'particular things' are the product of experience. In both cases good and evil are simply general names for the objects of desire and aversion respectively. 'Every man, for his own part, calleth that which pleaseth, and is delightful to himself, good; and that evil which displeaseth him: insomuch that while every man differeth from another in constitution, they differ also from one another concerning the common distinction of good and evil.'[1] There is 'nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves.'[2]

The actions of man are always in the line of his own apparent good, or determined by the prevailing appetite or desire. In an act of will Hobbes recognises a further important element, that of deliberation, or the 'alternate succession of appetite and fear during all the time the action is in our power to do or not to do.' But will itself is only 'the last appetite in deliberating.'[3] It follows, not only that will is not specifically different from animal appetite, but that no act of will is free in the sense

[1] *Human Nature*, ch. vii. [2] *Lev.*, ch. vi. [3] *Lev.*, ch. vi.

of not being determined by necessary causes, or in any sense in which the animal is not equally free.[1]

The extremes to which Hobbes is prepared to carry his view of the utter selfishness of human nature are illustrated in his account of the passions. We may take as examples the cases of pity, laughter, and charity. 'Pity is imagination or fiction of future calamity to ourselves, proceeding from the sense of another man's calamity.' 'The passion of laughter' is 'nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminence in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly.'[2] Even charity, love, or goodwill is ruthlessly traced to the same selfish source. 'There can be no greater argument to a man, of his own power, than to find himself able not only to accomplish his own desires, but also to assist other men in theirs: and this is that conception wherein consisteth charity.'[3]

His own happiness, then, is the one object of each man's pursuit. But since 'the felicity of this life consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied,' but is 'a continual progress of the desire from one object to another, the attaining of the former being still but the way to the latter,' it follows that the value which man cannot but put upon the continuance of his happiness, that is, of the opportunity of satisfying his ever new desires in the future, leads to a further 'general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death.' The chief cause of this restlessness is the insecurity of our happiness without increase of our powers or opportunities of future satisfaction. And since riches, honour, and other forms of power are subjects of competition, the result is 'contention, enmity, and war; because the way of one competitor to the attaining of his desire is to kill, subdue, supplant, or repel the other.'[4] 'So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory. The first maketh men invade for gain;

[1] *Cf.* Works, i. 409.
[2] *Human Nature*, ch. ix.; cf. *Lev.*, ch. vi.
[3] *Human Nature*, ch. ix.
[4] *Lev.*, pt. i. ch. xi.

the second, for safety; the third, for reputation. . . . Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man. For war consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known. . . . For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is peace.'[1] That the 'state of nature' is one of universal war is proved, Hobbes contends, by our conduct as individuals and as nations. Do we not, when we travel, arm ourselves with weapons of defence; do we not lock our doors and chests when we stay at home? Does not the man who thus protects himself against his fellows 'as much accuse mankind by his actions, as I do by my words?' And are not nations 'in the state and posture of gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms; and continual spies upon their neighbours; which is a posture of war?'[2]

In this 'state of nature' there is no distinction between justice and injustice; might is the only rule of right. 'To this war of every man, against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law: where no law, no injustice. Force, and fraud, are in war the two cardinal virtues. . . . It is consequent also to the same condition, that there can be no propriety, no dominion, no mine and thine distinct; but only that to be every man's, that he can get; and for so long, as he can keep it.'[3] The intoler-

[1] *Lev.*, pt. i. ch. xiii. [2] *Loc. cit.* [3] *Loc. cit.*

able misery of such a condition is graphically described. 'Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.'[1] The contrast is more succinctly stated in another work. 'The natural state hath the same proportion to the civil (I mean, liberty to subjection), which passion hath to reason, or a beast to a man.'[2] 'Justice and charity, the twin sisters of peace,' and all the other virtues, are the fruit of that settled order for which man is compelled, if he would live at all, to exchange his natural right to all things.

The deliverance from this 'state of nature,' the means of transition from war to peace, is found partly in the passions or natural dispositions of man, partly in his reason. 'The passions that incline men to peace, are fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them.' And 'reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement.'[3] These articles of peace are those 'Laws of Nature' 'by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same; and to omit that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved.'[4] They are immutable and eternal, since 'it can never be that war

[1] *Lev.*, pt. i. ch. xiii.
[2] Works, ii. 107.
[3] *Lev.*, pt. i. ch. xiii.
[4] *Ibid.*, pt. i. ch. xiv.

shall preserve life, and peace destroy it'; and 'the science of these is the true moral philosophy.' Virtue is 'the means of peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living';[1] vice is the opposite type of conduct.

The first law of nature is 'that every man ought to endeavour peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps and advantages of war.'[2] The second is 'that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far forth as for peace and defence of himself he may think it necessary, to lay down his right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself.' A right may be laid down either by simple renunciation, 'when he cares not to whom the benefit thereof redoundeth,' or by transference, 'when he intendeth the benefit thereof to some certain person, or persons.' When, in either of these ways, a man has abandoned his natural right, he is said to be 'obliged' or 'bound' not to hinder its new possessor from the benefit of it: 'he ought, and it is his duty, not to make void that voluntary act of his own;' 'such hindrance is injustice, and injury.'[3] The mutual transference of rights is what we mean by 'contract,' and the expression of contract by word or sign is a 'covenant.' The third law of nature, therefore, is 'that men perform their covenants made.'

But these laws of nature, and the others which Hobbes deduces from them, are contrary to our natural passions; and 'covenants without the sword are but words.' To enforce these covenants, to make them binding *in foro externo*, that is, in external deed, as well as *in foro interno*, or in the will and disposition of the individual, it is necessary to create a common power, which shall punish those who break them. The only way to create such a common power is for all the individuals to enter into an original contract 'to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men,

[1] *Lev.*, pt. i. ch. xv. [2] *Ibid.*, pt. i. ch. xiv. [3] *Loc. cit.*

that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or assembly of men, to bear their person. . . . This is more than consent, or concord; it is a real unity of them all, in one and the same person, made by covenant of every man with every man, in such manner, as if every man should say to every man, "I authorise and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorise all his actions in like manner." This done, the multitude so united in one person, is called a commonwealth.' A commonwealth may therefore be defined as 'one person, of whose acts a great multitude, by mutual covenants one with another, have made themselves the author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their peace and common defence.'[1] This common or representative person, whether a man or an assembly, is sovereign; and the power of the sovereign is, by its very nature, absolute and inalienable. The sovereign cannot be deposed: the subjects cannot 'transfer their person from him that beareth it, to another man, or other assembly of men.' Nor can the sovereign power be forfeited by breach of contract; for the covenant to which it owes its existence is only between the subjects, not between the subjects and the sovereign, and covenants are binding only by the compulsion of the sovereign power itself. Finally, the sovereign power is one and indivisible: a divided sovereignty, as, for example, between King and Parliament, is a contradiction in terms.

The central feature of this theory of the State, the so-called 'social contract,' has been constantly misunderstood, as implying that the State owes its historical origin to such a contract. It is quite clear that what Hobbes is really giving is a logical analysis of the implications or presuppositions, not a historical account of the genesis, of the State and political obligation. He distinguishes,

[1] *Lev.*, pt. i. ch. xvii.

moreover, between two modes in which the sovereign power and, with it, the commonwealth itself, may be established, namely, by 'institution' and by 'acquisition'; and he calls the latter the 'natural' form of political society. This type of State is exemplified not only in all cases of dominion by conquest, but also in the family and in the relation of master and servant. In calling this kind of society natural, as Croom Robertson remarks, 'he not obscurely suggests that the institutive is first only in the logical, not the historical, order. The state of nature, if it ever actually existed, must have been put an end to by the superior might of some men rather than by the deliberate consent of all; but how could it ever have existed in fact, when there never was a time that there were no masters, or at least fathers?'[1] It has often been asked, How could the original contract ever have taken place, seeing that the parties to it must have known that it was not binding in the state of nature from which it was yet the only deliverance? If, however, we think of it as the logical presupposition of the State, such a question becomes unmeaning.

To understand the theory, it is necessary to take account of the political circumstances out of which it arose, and which explain the practical, as well as the theoretical, interest of the argument for Hobbes himself. He speaks of 'my discourse of Civil and Ecclesiastical Government' as 'occasioned by the disorders of the present time,' and in the Preface to the *Philosophical Rudiments concerning Governments and Society* he thus explains the appearance of this treatise before the first and second parts of his system: 'Whilst I contrive, order, pensively and slowly compose these matters . . . it so happened in the interim, that my country, some few years before the civil wars did rage, was boiling hot with questions concerning the rights of dominion and the obedience due from subjects, the true forerunners of an approaching war; and was the cause which, all those

[1] *Hobbes*, in 'Philosophical Classics,' pp. 145–6.

other matters deferred, ripened and plucked from me this third part. . . . Yet I have not made it out of a desire of praise . . . but for your sakes, readers, who I persuaded myself, when you should rightly apprehend and thoroughly understand this doctrine I here present you with, would rather choose to brook with patience some inconveniences under government (because human affairs cannot possibly be without some), than self-opinionatedly to disturb the quiet of the public.'[1] The question raised by the civil war and the revolution is, in the eyes of Hobbes, the same as that which had chiefly perplexed the statesmanship of Bacon, the question of the seat of sovereignty in the English State; and Hobbes agrees with Bacon in holding not only that sovereignty cannot be divided between King and Parliament, but that its seat is in the Monarch. What was for Bacon merely a problem of practical statesmanship seemed to Hobbes, who had neither the responsibility nor the opportunity of the statesman, a problem of which the only satisfactory solution could be found in a theory of the essential nature of sovereignty and of the functions and rights of the sovereign. In the fate of the sovereign was involved the fate of the State itself; the attack upon the sovereign was in reality an attack upon the State. Hobbes professes to be indifferent to the alternatives of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. But whether the sovereignty be vested in one man or in an assembly, large or small, it must reside in a single authority, it must not be divided between King and Parliament: a 'mixed monarchy' is a radically unsound form of political constitution. And it is still more evident to him that a revolution, as such, means the dissolution of the State, the substitution of anarchy for the settled order of political existence.

What Hobbes is concerned, therefore, above all things to establish is the absoluteness and legal irresponsibility of the sovereign power in the State. But since he is convinced that, in defending the sovereign, he is defending the pre-

[1] Works, ii. pp. xx.–xxii.

supposition of the very existence of the State, he finds it necessary to raise the previous question of the value of the State itself to man as an individual. And in spite of the phrase 'state of nature,' which has unfortunately drawn the attention of his critics away from the central point of his answer to this question, there can be no doubt that his main purpose was to show how deeply natural the State is, how it is nature's (or reason's) own way of deliverance from the untold misery of unpolitical existence or anarchy. The end which, in his judgment, justifies the State and, therefore, absolute sovereignty, is the common good. It is better, incomparably better, for the individual to render unquestioning obedience to the sovereign power, and thus to secure all the blessings of life in an ordered society, than to purchase liberty at the price of anarchy. As Professor Taylor points out, what he is defending is not the doctrine of the 'divine right' of the monarch: his view is thoroughly democratic, and it was with a true insight that the later Utilitarians recognised its essential identity with their own. 'Though Hobbes's argument amounts to a defence of absolutism, the defence is throughout based on rationalistic and, consequently, democratic grounds. . . . There is much more community of spirit between Hobbes and Locke or Sidney, or even Rousseau, than between Hobbes and Filmer.' [1]

There was ever present to the mind of Hobbes a second and quite different menace to the integrity of the State, the rival claim of the Church to dominion over the individual; and though he makes no discrimination between the churches, Roman, Anglican, or Presbyterian, so far as this claim is concerned, it is clearly the power of the Papacy that he chiefly fears. The Church of Rome, as such, claims to override the allegiance of the subject to his earthly sovereign; it would set up 'supremacy against sovereignty; canons against laws; and a ghostly authority against the civil.' Against the political and temporal sanctions of conduct, it brings to bear upon man

[1] *Hobbes*, in Constable's 'Philosophies Ancient and Modern,' pp. 91–2.

the supernatural and eternal sanctions of religion. By playing upon that 'superstitious fear of spirits,' that 'fear of things invisible,' which is 'the natural seed' of religion and of superstition alike, it has succeeded in establishing itself in the place of the Roman empire, and threatens man with a more ignoble bondage. 'If a man consider the original of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive, that the Papacy is no other than the *ghost* of the deceased Roman empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof. For so did the Papacy start up on a sudden out of the ruins of that heathen power.'[1] The acceptance of this claim means either a dualism between the temporal and the spiritual power which negates the sovereignty of the State, or the absorption of the State in the Church, which contradicts no less violently the idea of the State. Hobbes's solution of the problem is to reverse the subordination, and to make the Church the servant of the State. It is to the State, he holds, that we owe the fundamental distinction between true religion and vain superstition; it is from the State, therefore, that the Church derives her authority. 'Religion is not philosophy, but law.' We know nothing, as we have seen, about God and the supernatural; in these questions, as much as in questions of ordinary conduct, we must be guided by the authority of the State. The only way to save the integrity of the State is to absorb the Church in it, and thus make the latter the organ and instrument of the former. Church and State are a single society, 'which is called a civil State, for that the subjects of it are men, and a Church, for that the subjects thereof are Christians.'

In spite of the democratic purpose which really inspires his political theory, the outcome of Hobbes's speculations is thus seen to be the justification of the complete subjection of the individual to the State, the vindication of a practically unqualified political despotism. The essentially true doctrine of sovereignty becomes, in his

[1] *Lev.*, pt. iv. ch. xlvii.

hands, the false and pernicious doctrine that the despotic type of government is the true and only possible constitution of the State. This disappointing result is due partly to the political circumstances which were the occasion of the whole inquiry, partly to fundamental defects in Hobbes's own philosophy. So far as the first of these causes is concerned, it is only fair to Hobbes to remember that to him the only alternatives could hardly fail to appear to be despotism and anarchy. It would be unreasonable to expect him to have foreseen the actual solution of the problem of sovereignty in a constitutional monarchy, in a more truly democratic and representative form of government in which the seat of sovereignty is found rather in Parliament than in the King. A theory more nearly answering to these facts of the growing political life of England we shall find in the important development and revision of the 'Social Contract' theory of the State which we owe to Locke. The deeper explanation of the inadequacies of Hobbes's political theory is to be found in his egoistic view of human nature. If we are to derive the State from human nature, as we must, it must be from such a nature as Aristotle or Grotius ascribed to man, rational in a deeper sense than Hobbes admits, and social in a sense which he denies. An individual who cannot recognise a common good, or any good at all except his own 'preservation' and 'delectation,' can never be a citizen; such individuals are incapable of any real 'social contract.' It was reserved for Rousseau to develop the fuller truth of a political theory which, in its author's hands, remained inevitably incomplete and misleading.

Even in Hobbes's own statement of it, however, there are suggestions of this later development. Insistent as he is upon the absoluteness and irresponsibility of the sovereign power, he recognises the existence of certain limits to its legitimate exercise. The essential limit is found in the end for the realisation of which the State exists, namely, the preservation of the life of the individual. 'If the sovereign command a man, though justly condemned, to

kill, wound, or maim himself; or not to resist those that assault him; or to abstain from the use of food, air, medicine, or any other thing, without which he cannot live; yet hath that man the liberty to disobey. . . . When, therefore, our refusal to obey frustrates the end for which the sovereignty was ordained; then there is no liberty to refuse: otherwise there is.'[1] Similarly, he argues, the validity of the commands of the sovereign is conditioned by his ability to discharge the office of sovereign, that is, to protect his subjects. 'The obligation of subjects to the sovereign is understood to last as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them. For the right men have by nature to protect themselves, when none else can protect them, can by no covenant be relinquished. The sovereignty is the soul of the commonwealth; which once departed from the body, the members do no more receive their motion from it. The end of obedience is protection; which, wheresoever a man seeth it, either in his own, or in another's sword, nature applieth his obedience to it, and his endeavour to maintain it.'[2] And though, in the *Leviathan*, he speaks of the 'office,' rather than of the 'duty' of the sovereign, even in that treatise he recognises that the sovereign is responsible to God, if not to his subjects, and in the *De Corpore Politico* he says that 'the duty of a sovereign consisteth in the good government of the people. And although the acts of sovereign power be no injuries to the subjects who have consented to the same by their implicit wills, yet when they tend to the hurt of the people in general, they be breaches of the law of nature, and of the divine law; and consequently, the contrary acts are the duties of sovereigns, and required at their hands to the utmost of their endeavour, by God Almighty, under the pain of eternal death.'[3]

Whatever may be the merits or the demerits of the philosophy of Hobbes, there can be only one opinion as to

[1] *Lev.*, pt. iv. ch. xxi. [2] Works, ii. 178.
[3] Works, iv. 213. *Cf.* Works, iv. 213, 214.

the quality of its literary expression. Of his writings it is even more true than of those of Bacon, that the language is a well-nigh perfect instrument of philosophical exposition and argument. 'Among English writers,' says Masson, 'there are few comparable to Hobbes for combined perspicuity and strength. Every sentence is as clear as can be, and yet full of independence and character. Happy and memorable expressions abound, and in page after page there breaks out the sarcastic humour of one who sees the faces of his readers as he writes, and of some readers in particular, and hits the harder the more they wince.'[1] In the Epistle Dedicatory to the *Human Nature*, he apologises for the style, which is 'the worse because, whilst I was writing, I consulted more with logic than with rhetoric.' But the supreme merit of his style is its perfect appropriateness to the subject and the argument. As Hallam says, 'Hobbes's language is so lucid and concise, that it would almost be as improper to put an algebraical process in different terms as some of his metaphysical paragraphs.' If he seldom moves us, or stimulates the imagination, as Bacon does, yet in the essential qualities of lucidity and vigour and in the characteristically Baconian quality of succinctness, of packing a paragraph into a sentence or a phrase, he is not second even to Bacon. These qualities are sufficiently exemplified in the numerous citations which have been made in the foregoing account of his philosophy; but it may perhaps be well to add two passages, chosen out of many, as striking examples of his best writing. The one is part of the comparison of Monarchy and Democracy which occurs in the *Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society*:

'But perhaps for this very reason, some will say that a popular State is to be preferred before a monarchical; because that where all men have a hand in public businesses, there all have an opportunity to show their wisdom, knowledge, and eloquence, in deliberating matters of the greatest difficulty and moment; which by reason of that

[1] *Life of Milton*, vi. 288.

desire of praise which is bred in human nature, is to them who excel in such-like faculties, and seem to themselves to exceed others, the most delightful of all things. But in a monarchy, this same way to obtain praise and honour is shut up to the greatest part of subjects; and what is a grievance if this be none? I will tell you: to see his opinion, whom we scorn, preferred before ours; to have our wisdom undervalued before our own faces; by an uncertain trial of a little vain glory, to undergo most certain enmities (for this cannot be avoided, whether we have the better or the worse); to hate and to be hated, by reason of the disagreement of opinions; to lay open our secret councils and advices to all, to no purpose and without any benefit; to neglect the affairs of our own family: these, I say, are grievances. But to be absent from a trial of wits, although those trials are pleasant to the eloquent, is not therefore a grievance to them; unless we will say, that it is a grievance to valiant men to be restrained from fighting, because they delight in it.'[1]

The other passage is a brief paragraph which, according to Professor Sorley, 'may be taken as having started the line of thought which issued in the theory of association, for a long time dominant in English psychology:'[2] 'And yet in this wild ranging of the mind, a man may oft-times perceive the way of it, and the dependence of one thought upon another. For in a discourse of our present civil war, what could seem more impertinent, than to ask (as one did) what was the value of a Roman penny? yet the coherence to me was manifest enough. For the thought of the war introduced the thought of the delivering up the king to his enemies; the thought of that brought in the thought of the delivering up of Christ; and that again the thought of the thirty pence, which was the price of that treason; and thence easily followed that malicious question; and all this in a moment of time; for thought is quick.'[3]

[1] Works, ii. 136.
[2] *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. vii. ch. xii.
[3] *Lev.*, pt. i. ch. iii.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEALISTIC REACTION: CAMBRIDGE PLATONISM AND RATIONALISM

It was inevitable that the radical speculation of Hobbes, alike in the spheres of metaphysics and of politics, should provoke a reaction, and should rally to the defence of the higher spiritual interests of human life those to whom these interests seemed to be bound up with a spiritual interpretation of the universe and a social interpretation of human nature. Hobbes had indeed professed to be a defender of the Christian faith; but it was little wonder that this new 'Epicurism' should seem to religious thinkers 'but atheism under a mask,' and that the unmasking of this hidden and, therefore, all the more dangerous, atheism should seem the appointed task of the devout thinker. The fundamental error of Hobbes, as well as of Bacon, seemed to such men to be the absolute distinction and separation of the spheres of faith and reason, of theology and philosophy. Such a separation meant the ultimate denial of the reasonableness of religion, the obliteration of the distinction between religion and superstition. The aim of the Cambridge Platonists was the reunion of these two spheres, the vindication of the rational character of religion.

Apart, however, from the polemical motive supplied by the effort to refute the views of Hobbes, these thinkers, who were all Churchmen as well as academic teachers, were conscious of another danger to religion within the Church itself. It is a notable fact that, with the exception of More, the leading members of the school were trained in Emmanuel College, the great Puritan founda-

tion; and they were inspired by the common ideal of emancipation from the narrowness and intolerance of Puritan dogmatism, they revolted with one consent against the subjection of reason to faith which was demanded by the Protestant no less really than by the Catholic theology. From Puritan dogmatism and intolerance, no less than from Prelatical formalism, they appealed to life and conduct as the true measure of religion. They are among the earliest defenders of the principle of toleration. Subordinating doctrine to life, and regarding the greater part of the doctrine of the Protestant 'Confessions' as mere matter of opinion, they came to be known as the 'Latitudinarians,' and were eyed askance by the orthodox of both theological parties. Their constant effort was to extricate the essential truth of Christianity from the accidents which had gathered round it in the course of the centuries, and this essential core of truth was, in their eyes, identical with goodness of life and, therefore, accessible to all rational beings. If they did not deny the distinction between natural and revealed truth, the burden of their teaching was that all essential truth came to men by 'the light of nature,' that 'the Spirit of a Man is the Candle of the Lord, lighted *by* God, and lighting us *to* God.'[1]

Still another influence must be mentioned as determining the spirit and attitude of the Cambridge Platonists, namely, that of Descartes. This influence is primarily negative. Ignoring the spiritual side of the Cartesian philosophy, they are repelled by its dualism of thought and extension, its separation of the spheres of matter and mind, and its authentication of the mechanical method and point of view so far as the material world is concerned. In its exclusion of the action of spirit from the latter sphere, and in its substitution of mechanical for final causes, they see the same menace to the interests of a spiritual or idealistic interpretation of reality as they discover in the materialism of Hobbes. The Car-

[1] Whichcote, Aphorisms, Campagnac's *Cambridge Platonists*, p. 70.

tesians, says Cudworth, 'have an undiscerned tang of the mechanic Atheism hanging about them.' In opposition to both Hobbes and Descartes, therefore, the Cambridge idealists proclaim the spiritual constitution of the so-called material world. Not only are there, as Descartes admitted, spiritual as well as material substances, but spiritual substance alone truly *is*. Matter, truly understood, is spirit. Only from the spiritual constitution of the universe can a divine or universal Spirit be inferred. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the Cambridge Platonists were influenced positively, as well as negatively, by the Cartesian philosophy, of which More especially was in his youth an enthusiastic admirer. The great questions with which they are concerned are the same as those which had preoccupied Descartes—the existence of God and the relation of matter to spirit. And their aim is the same as his—to show the rational basis of faith, to reduce its content to 'clear and distinct ideas.'[1]

While the only names that have become widely known are those of Cudworth and More, three other names are too important to be altogether overlooked. The movement owes its origin to the remarkable influence, as a teacher and preacher, if not as a writer, of Benjamin Whichcote, an influence which was extended by the similar activities of John Smith and Nathaniel Culverwel, although the latter, according to Professor Sorley, 'can hardly be counted as belonging to the group.' It is to the treatises of Ralph Cudworth on *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* and on *Eternal and Immutable Morality* that we must look for a systematic account of the philosophy of the school. Henry More, whose chief philosophical work is the *Encheiridion Ethicum*, 'represents,' as Tulloch says, 'more than any other member of the school, the mystical and theosophic side of the Cambridge movement.'[2] He is not the least interesting

[1] *Cf.* Tulloch, *Rational Theology in England in the Seventeenth Century*, ii. 17–20.

[2] *Ency. Brit.*, 9th ed., art. 'Henry More.'

or important in a group of singularly impressive and influential personalities.

If it was in More that the mystical tendency reached its culmination, it is not to be denied that such a tendency was present in the movement from the first. In its other representative members, however, this tendency was kept well subordinated to the rationalism which was even more characteristic of the movement as a whole. It is true that none of the so-called Cambridge Platonists clearly distinguished between the original teaching of Plato himself and that of the Neo-Platonists. As Tulloch says, 'The suspicion that Plotinus and Proclus, while building upon the Platonic basis, may have had little or none of the spirit of the master-builder, never disturbed them. Platonism was to them a vast mass of transcendental Thought, dating from Pythagoras and even Moses, and stretching downwards through Alexandrian and mediæval Jewish schools; and it was this Platonism of tradition—of the successive spiritualistic schools which had contended for a super-sensual philosophy, and peopled the world of faith with many fantastic reveries—which ruled their spirits and inspired their philosophic ambition. In this sense alone can they be called Platonists.'[1] On the other hand, it is an exaggeration to say, with Coleridge, that they were 'more truly Plotinists' than Platonists,[2] or to attribute to them 'a corrupt, mystical, theurgical, pseudo-Platonism, which infected the rarest minds under the Stuart dynasty.'[3] It is true that they shared many of the superstitious ideas of their age, and that their attitude to earlier thinkers was uncritical; that, in Tulloch's words, 'they leant too fondly on the past, and made too much of ancient wisdom.'[4] But the main lines of their thought are clearly derived from Plato himself, and from such dialectical dialogues as the *Theætetus* and the *Parmenides* hardly less than from the more poetical and mystical dialogues. In Cudworth this return to the original and more dialectical teaching of Plato is especially characteristic.

[1] *Rational Theology*, ii. 481.
[2] *Notes on English Divines*, i. 351.
[3] *Ibid.*, i. 130.
[4] *Rational Theology*, ii. 137.

Their undue dependence upon the past shows its evil influence not less in the style or manner than in the matter of their writing. Their style is scholastic and pedantic to a degree almost intolerable to the modern reader. The quotations with which they fill their pages fatally interrupt the continuity of the argument, and would be intolerable even as foot-notes in a book of the present day. It is as if they had not really mastered and assimilated the thought of the past to which they are so anxious to serve themselves heirs. They seem to feel it necessary to dress out their own ideas in the borrowed feathers of illustrious names; afraid to trust to the inherent weight of their argument, they seek some more sure support for it in the wisdom of the ancients. 'They crowd their books with specimens of all the intellectual furniture which they have gathered in the course of their studies.'[1] It is a remarkable testimony to the real power of their thinking, as well as to their real gift of expression, that in spite of these defects their writings are studded with so many fine and memorable sayings which themselves bear well the ordeal of quotation. Of the founder of the school Westcott says, 'There are few prose writers of any time from whom one could gather more "jewels five-words long" than from Whichcote.'[2]

The philosophy of the Cambridge Platonists centres in three main positions: (1) the unity of faith and reason, of religion and life; (2) the spiritual constitution of the universe; and (3) the reasonableness, as opposed to the arbitrariness of morality, its foundation in reason rather than in mere will, and hence its absolute, as opposed to its merely relative validity.

(1) The essential identity of the content of faith with that of reason is a favourite topic with all the writers of this school; it is indeed the starting-point of their entire intellectual effort. 'Truth is the Soul's Health and Strength, natural and true Perfection. . . . No sooner doth the

[1] Tulloch, *Rational Theology*, ii. 477.
[2] *Religious Thought in the West*, p. 371.

Truth of God come to our Soul's Sight, but our Soul knows her, as her first and old Acquaintance: which, though they have been by some Accident unhappily parted a great while; yet having now, through the Divine Providence, happily met, they greet one another, and renew their Acquaintance, as those that were first and ancient Friends.'[1] 'That which is the Height and Excellency of Humane Nature, *viz.* our Reason, is not laid aside nor discharged, much less is it confounded by any of the Materials of Religion; but awakened, excited, employed, directed, and improved by it.' 'In all things of weight, in the great Points of Conscience, in the great Materials of Religion, there is a Reason in the Things, that doth enforce them, and enjoin them upon us, and require them of us.' 'This is the peculiarity of Humane Nature, that through the Reason of his Mind, he may come to understand the Reason of Things: and this is that you are to do; and there is no coming to Religion but this way.'[2] Very similar is the language of Smith in the discourse on *The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion*. 'It's a fond imagination that Religion should extinguish Reason; whenas Religion makes it more illustrious and vigorous; and they that live most in the exercise of Religion, shall find their Reason most enlarged.' 'Unreasonableness or the smothering and extinguishing the Candle of the Lord within us is no piece of Religion, nor advantageous to it: that certainly will not raise men up to God, which sinks them below men.'

The intimate connection of such religious insight or knowledge with life and conduct is no less emphatically asserted. 'True piety and a Godlike pattern of purity' is the 'best way to thrive in all spiritual understanding'; 'a holy life' is 'the best and most compendious way to a right belief.' 'If we would indeed have our Knowledge thrive and flourish, we must water the tender plants of it with Holiness. . . . The reason why, notwithstanding all our acute reasons and subtile disputes, Truth prevails

[1] Whichcote, *Evidence of Divine Truth*, Campagnac, 3, 4.
[2] Whichcote, *Work of Reason*, Campagnac, 51, 53.

no more in the world, is, we so often disjoin Truth and true Goodness, which in themselves can never be disunited; they grow both from the same Root, and live in one another. . . . He that wants true Vertue, in heaven's Logick *is blind, and cannot see afar off*.'[1] The obverse side of this relation, namely, that true religion must find its expression in goodness of life, is no less frequently emphasised; but this, as a more obvious position, it is unnecessary to illustrate by quotation.

(2) We find the general argument for a spiritual interpretation of the universe, as against the materialism of Hobbes, set forth with much force and eloquence in Smith's discourses on *The Immortality of the Soul* and on *The Existence and Nature of God*. He protests against 'that flat and dull Philosophy which these later ages have brought forth,' and insists upon the higher validity of those principles for which the mind of man is indebted, not to the senses, but to its own inherent intellectual power. 'Whensoever it will speculate Truth itself, it will not then listen to the several clamours and votes of these rude Senses which always speak with divided tongues, but it consults some clearer Oracle within itself.' In the spiritual nature of the human soul he sees the true revelation of the nature of God and the proof of the divine existence. But it is in Cudworth that we find the most sustained and convincing refutation of the materialistic view. Reducing materialism to sensationalism, Cudworth sees in Hobbes the reviver of the Protagorean scepticism and, with obvious indebtedness to the argument of Plato in the *Theætetus*, deduces from the self-contradictoriness of such a scepticism the presence of rational elements in all knowledge. Its essential feature he finds to be judgment. 'The *Sight* cannot judge of *Sounds* which belong to the *Hearing*, nor the *Hearing* of *Light* and *Colours*; wherefore that which judges of all the Senses and their several Objects, cannot be it self any Sense, but something

[1] John Smith, *Method of Divine Knowledge*, Campagnac, 81, 82.

of a superior Nature. Moreover, that which judges that the Appearances of all the Senses have something Fantastical in them, cannot possibly be itself Fantastical, but it must be something which hath a Power of judging what Really and Absolutely is or is not. This being not a Relative, but an Absolute Truth, that Sensible Appearances have something Fantastical in them.'[1] 'Wherefore though Men are commonly said to know things when they see and feel them, yet in truth by their bodily Senses they perceive nothing but their Outsides and External Induments. Just as when a Man looking down out of a Window into the Streets, is said to see Men walking in the Streets, when indeed he perceives nothing but Hats and Cloaths, under which, for ought he knows, there may be Dædalean Statues moving up and down.'[2] By its very nature sense can reveal to the percipient only appearance, or the 'phantastical and relative.'

Reality, as distinguished from appearance, is constituted by those intelligible forms or ideas which are the expression of the rational constitution of the knowing mind itself. 'Knowledge is not a Passion from anything without the Mind, but an Active Exertion of the Inward Strength, Vigour and Power of the Mind, displaying it self from within; and the Intelligible Forms by which Things are Understood or Known, are not Stamps or Impressions passively printed upon the Soul from without, but Ideas vitally protended or actively exerted from within it self. A Thing which is merely Passive from without, and doth only receive Foreign and Adventitious Forms, cannot possibly Know, Understand or Judge of that which it receives, but must needs be a Stranger to it, having nothing within it self to know it by. The Mind cannot know any thing, but by something of its own, that is Native, Domestic and Familiar to it.'[3] Thus it is to the knowing intellect that we owe the apprehension of the unity of the parts in a total object; intellect alone can 'comprehend the Formal Reason of it, as a Whole made up of several Parts, according

[1] *Eternal and Immutable Morality*, Bk. ii. ch. vi. *Cf.* Bk. iii. ch. iv.
[2] *Ibid.*, Bk. iii. ch. iii. [3] *Ibid.*, Bk. iv. ch. i.

to several Relations and Proportions contributing thereto.' The idea of this whole 'was never stamped or impressed upon the Soul from without, but upon occasion of the Sensible Idea was excited and exerted from the inward Active and Comprehensive Power of the Intellect itself.'[1] It follows that 'the Mind or Intellect may well be called (though in another Sense than Protagoras meant it) *The Measure of all Things*.'[2]

From the rational constitution of knowledge Cudworth infers the existence first of the rational self and, secondly, of God. 'For tho' it should be supposed that our Senses did deceive us in all their Representations, and that there were no Sun, no Moon, no Earth, that we had no Hands, no Feet, no Body, as by Sense we seem to have, yet Reason tells us that of Necessity That must be something, to whom these things seem to be, because nothing can seem to that that is not.'[3] On the other hand, the constancy of the existence of things, independent of their being actually ideas in 'our particular created minds,' the eternity and immutability of real existence, implies a divine Mind or universal Intelligence. Geometrical truth does not depend for its reality upon the apprehension of the geometrician, or change with his advancing knowledge. It follows that 'there is an Eternal Wisdom and Knowledge in the World, necessarily existing, which was never made, and can never cease to be or be destroyed; or, which is all one, that there is an Infinite, Eternal Mind necessarily existing, that actually comprehends himself, the Possibility of all Things, and the Verities Clinging to them. In a word, that there is a God, or an Omnipotent and Omniscient Being, necessarily existing, who therefore cannot destroy his own Being or Nature, that is, his Infinite Power and Wisdom.'[4]

(3) The real interest of the metaphysical argument lies, for these thinkers, in its ethical and religious consequences. They find in reason the only secure basis for the absolute

[1] *Eternal and Immutable Morality*, Bk. iv. ch. ii.
[2] *Ibid.*, Bk. iv. ch. i. [3] Bk. ii. ch. vi. [4] *Ibid.*, Bk. iv. ch. iv.

obligatoriness of morality: it is not mere law, the expression of arbitrary will, but the expression of the nature of things, of the rational constitution of the universe. Not even the divine Will is for them the ultimate source of moral laws; the divine Will is guided by the divine Reason, or by regard to the essential nature of things. This ethical deduction, which is only briefly suggested by Cudworth, receives the chief emphasis in Whichcote's discourses. Moral truths, he says, 'have a deeper Foundation, greater Ground for them, than that God gave the Law on Mount Sinai; or that he did after ingrave it on Tables of Stone; or that we find the Ten Commandments in the Bible. For God made Man to them, and did write them upon the Heart of Man, before he did declare them upon Mount *Sinai*, before he ingraved them upon the Tables of Stone, or before they were writ in our Bibles; God made man to them, and wrought His Law upon Men's Hearts; and, as it were, interwove it into the Principles of our Reason; and the things thereof are the very Sense of Man's Soul, and the Image of his Mind: so that a Man doth undo his own being, departs from himself, and unmakes himself, confounds his own Principles, when he is disobedient and unconformable to them; and must necessarily be self-condemned.'[1] It is no less characteristic of man's nature to act conformably to these rational principles than it is natural for a non-rational being to be guided by sense and impulse. 'By which you may see the Degeneracy of us Mortals; in that the State below us remains in the same Principle it was created in; but we Men do neither find out the Reasons of things, nor comply with them. Our Deformity is more; because our Perfection is more and the Order of our Being is higher . . . and we use to say, the Fault is greater in him that is in a higher State.'[2]

Outside the school of Cambridge Platonism the movement of idealistic or rationalistic philosophy in England in

[1] *Evidence of Divine Truth*, Campagnac, 5.
[2] *Christian Religion*, Campagnac, 37.

the seventeenth century is represented by two important names, Lord Herbert of Cherbury and Richard Cumberland. The first of these writers is specially remarkable as having at a much earlier period arrived at a theory of knowledge essentially identical with that of the Cambridge Platonists. In the *De Veritate*, published in 1624, Herbert of Cherbury formulated the view that, in addition to external and internal sense and the discursive or reasoning faculty, it is necessary to postulate what he calls, after the Stoics, 'common notions' or 'received principles of demonstration,' which are apprehended by 'natural instinct' and must be regarded as the presuppositions rather than as the products of experience. The mind is, previous to experience, not a *tabula rasa*, but a 'closed book,' which is opened by the presentation of sensible objects. Referring to this theory, Culverwel says: 'There is a *Noble Author* of our own, that hath both his *truth* and his *errour*, (as he hath also writ about both), who pleads much for his *Instinctus naturales*, so as that, at the first dash, you would think him in a *Platonical* strain; but, if you attend more to what he says, you will soon perceive that he prosecutes a far different *Notion*, much to be preferred before the other *phancy*. For he doth not make these *instincts* any *connate Ideas*, and representations of Things; but tells us, that they are *powers* and *faculties* of the *Soul*, the *first-born faculties* and *beginning* of the *Soul's strength*, that are presently *espoused* to their *Virgin-objects* closing and complying with them, long before *Discourse* can reach them; nay, with such objects as *Discourse* cannot reach at all in such a *measure* and *perfection*. . . . If you ask, when these *highest faculties* did first *open* and *display* themselves, he tells you, 'tis then when they were *stimulated*, and *excited* by *outward Objects*.'[1] Lord Herbert is better known as 'the father of Deism,' and he certainly rationalises religion to an extent far beyond the daring of the Cambridge divines. Among the 'common notions' are those which constitute the natural instinct of religion and the essence of 'natural

[1] *Light of Nature*, ch. xi., Campagnac, 289, 290.

religion,' namely, the existence of God, the duty of worship, the identity of worship and virtue, the duty of repentance, and future reward and punishment. This natural core of religion has been overlaid by subsequent accretions of superstition and dogma; in the case of Christianity, as well as the other historical religions, priestcraft and guile have obscured the simplicity of natural religion. But the author himself seems more interested in the positive than in the negative side of his argument; his work is rather a plea for religion, as fundamentally rational in its nature and source, than a criticism of actual religion and theology, or an exposure of their irrationality.

Richard Cumberland is a contemporary of the Cambridge Platonists, and has the same polemical purpose as Cudworth, namely, the refutation of the views of Hobbes. On the title-page of his *De Legibus Naturae*, published in 1672, he professes to 'consider and refute' 'the elements of Mr. Hobbes's Philosophy, as well Moral as Civil.' He is no Platonist, and attacks the theory of Innate Ideas as a Platonic error. 'The *Platonists*, indeed, clear up this Difficulty in an easier manner, by the Supposition of *innate Ideas,* as well of the Laws of Nature themselves, as of those Matters about which they are conservant; but, truly, I have not been so happy as to learn the Laws of Nature in so short a way. Nor seems it to me well advised, to build the Doctrine of *natural Religion* and *Morality* upon an *Hypothesis*, which has been *rejected* by the *generality of Philosophers*, as well *Heathen* as *Christian*, and *can never be proved* against the *Epicureans*, with whom is our chief Controversy.'[1] Unlike his predecessors, he limits the inquiry to ethics, and seeks to prove the 'naturalness' of moral laws. Laws of Nature, in this ethical reference, are defined by him as 'propositions of unchangeable Truth, which direct our voluntary Actions about choosing Good and Evil; and impose an Obligation to external actions even without Civil Laws, and laying aside all Considerations of those Compacts which constitute Civil Government.'[2] He defines 'Good' as

[1] Introd., sect. v.

[2] Ch. i. p. 39.

'that which preserves, or enlarges and perfects, the Faculties of any one Thing, or of several.'[1] It follows that the Law of Nature prescribes those actions which 'will chiefly promote the common Good, and by which only the entire Happiness of particular Persons can be obtained.'[2] From these statements it seems clear that, while he accepts Hobbes's term 'preservation,' he includes both happiness and perfection, or development of faculty, as inseparable elements in the Good. He is more concerned with the determination of the form of conduct which will lead to the attainment of this end; and his conclusion is that the best method of securing it is that of benevolence, or regard for the common good, as opposed to selfish preoccupation with our own individual interests. 'The greatest Benevolence of every rational Agent towards all, forms the happiest State of every, and of all the Benevolent, as far as is in their Power; and is necessarily requisite to the happiest State which they can attain, and therefore the common Good is the supreme Law.'[3] This endeavour to promote the common good 'includes our Love of God, and of all Mankind, who are the Parts of this System. God, indeed, is the principal Part; Men the subordinate: A benevolence toward both includes Piety and Humanity, that is, both Tables of the Law of Nature.'[4] He repeatedly points out that the common good includes our own, as one of its parts; but it must be sought only as a part, in subordination to the whole. Cumberland's confidence in the perfect coincidence of virtue, or benevolence, and individual happiness ultimately depends upon his doctrine of the divine sanctions of the Laws of Nature. But his main interest in the ethical question is to insist, against Hobbes, upon the 'naturalness' of the law of benevolence and the inherent unreasonableness of separating the individual and his good from the system of rational beings of which he is in reality only a part, and with whose good his own is inseparably bound up.

[1] Ch. ii. p. 165.
[2] Ch. v. p. 189.
[3] Ch. i.
[4] Introd., sect. xv. p. 20.

CHAPTER IV

LOCKE: THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

It was not the study of either Bacon or Hobbes that first awakened Locke's interest in philosophy or determined the direction of his own philosophical development. Although there is much in his writings which we can hardly but interpret as aimed against the views of these thinkers, there is practically no mention of them in his works. As an undergraduate at Oxford, he was compelled to read the Scholastic philosophy, and was trained in the art of disputation; and his entire philosophical activity may be regarded as a protest against the settlement of intellectual questions by verbal disputation and submission to authority. Following up his undergraduate course with professional medical study, he came into contact with the Baconian spirit of experimental investigation which was already moving the life of the University. 'It might be interesting,' says Professor Campbell Fraser, 'to speculate upon the consequences to philosophy, in England and in Europe, if Locke had spent his academical life at Cambridge instead of Oxford, and had breathed its atmosphere of Platonism, instead of pursuing physical experiments at Oxford, when Oxford was giving birth to its Royal Society.'[1] But while we must trace the spirit of intellectual freedom, and the faith in experience, which are so characteristic of Locke, to the influence, negative and positive, of his academic environment, there can be no doubt that the real influence which first set him thinking about the problems of philosophy, and which determined the specific

[1] Introd. to *Essay*, p. xxxiv.

nature of his own problem, was the early study of the writings of Descartes. This influence was negative rather than positive. The confidence of Descartes in the 'clearness and distinctness' of our ideas as a criterion of truth tempted him and his successors to attempt metaphysical construction of a kind which roused suspicion in Locke's more cautious English mind, and forced upon him the previous question of the validity and extent of the knowledge contained in such clear and distinct ideas.

Locke's real affinity is, therefore, rather with Bacon than with either Hobbes or Descartes. Like Bacon, he is a critic of human knowledge, a surveyor of the foundations rather than a builder of the structure of science and philosophy. He contrasts the modesty of his own undertaking with the grander designs of the scientific minds of the time. 'The commonwealth of learning is not at this time without master-builders, whose mighty designs, in advancing the sciences, will leave lasting monuments to the admiration of posterity, but every one must not hope to be a Boyle or a Sydenham; and in an age that produces such masters as the great Huygenius and the incomparable Mr. Newton, with some others of that strain, it is ambition enough to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge.'[1] Like Bacon, too, Locke is primarily interested in the practical utility of knowledge. 'Our business here is not to know all things, but those which concern our conduct. . . . It is of great use to the sailor to know the length of his line, though he cannot with it fathom all the depths of the ocean. It is well he knows that it is long enough to reach the bottom, at such places as are necessary to direct his voyage, and caution him against running upon shoals that may ruin him.'[2] The difference between Locke and Bacon is that while Bacon sought to formulate the true method of scientific investigation, Locke is concerned with the previous question of the possibility of knowledge

[1] *Essay*, 'Epistle to the Reader.' [2] *Ibid.*

itself; how far it extends, and where the line must be drawn between certain knowledge and probable opinion. While Bacon sought to formulate the methods of scientific knowledge, or to construct a system of inductive logic, Locke comes, in the end, to the conclusion that no 'science of bodies,' or certain knowledge of the real world, is possible, and that the needs of practice are sufficiently met by the probabilities of opinion, or belief.

So far as English philosophy is concerned, Locke is the first to state the problem in this form; his is the first criticism of human knowledge, or epistemology.[1] His statement of the problem is of epoch-making importance for the subsequent development of philosophy in England and on the Continent, in the hands especially of Hume and Kant. Locke himself seems to have been led to his statement of it by his experience of the difficulties in which the discussion of moral and religious questions involves the human mind. We learn from his commonplace books that he was in his early life much interested in such questions, and in the 'Epistle to the Reader' he tells us: 'Were it fit to trouble thee with the history of this *Essay*, I should tell thee, that five or six friends meeting at my chamber, and discoursing on a subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand, by the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had awhile puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course; and that, before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what *objects* our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with.' The discovery of the boundary line that separates certainty from probability, knowledge from opinion, will guide us in the profitable use of our understandings: 'we shall then use our understandings right, when we entertain all objects in that way and proportion

[1] Unless Herbert of Cherbury's *De Veritate* is to be regarded as a critical inquiry into the relations of knowledge and reality, as Professor Sorley urges (*Mind*, N.S., iii. 491 ff.).

that they are suited to our faculties, and upon those grounds they are capable of being proposed to us; and not peremptorily or intemperately require demonstration, and demand certainty, where probability only is to be had, and which is sufficient to govern all our concernments.'[1] Of the practical sufficiency of our knowledge Locke never has any doubt. 'For though the comprehension of our understandings comes exceedingly short of the vast extent of things, yet we shall have cause enough to magnify the bountiful Author of our being for that portion and degree of knowledge he has bestowed on us, so far above all the rest of the inhabitants of this our mansion. . . . We shall not have much reason to complain of the narrowness of our minds, if we will but employ them about what may be of use to us; for of that they are very capable. And it will be an unpardonable, as well as childish peevishness, if we undervalue the advantages of our knowledge, and neglect to improve it to the ends for which it was given us, because there are some things that are set out of the reach of it. It will be no excuse to an idle and untoward servant, who would not attend his business by candle light, to plead that he had not bright sunshine. The Candle that is set up in us shines bright enough for all our purposes.'[2]

At the very threshold of such an examination of knowledge and opinion, however, Locke is met by the objection that there is a part of human knowledge whose validity is beyond question, that we have a set of ideas which are not, like the rest, acquired, but 'innate,' the immediate and indubitable expression of reason itself. 'When men have found some general propositions that could not be doubted of as soon as understood, it was, I know, a short and easy way to conclude them innate. This being once received, it eased the lazy from the pains of search, and stopped the inquiry of the doubtful concerning all that was once styled innate. And it was of no small advantage to those who affected to be masters and

[1] Introd., sect. 5. [2] *Loc. cit.*

teachers, to make this the principle of principles—*that principles must not be questioned*.'[1] The first Book of the *Essay* is accordingly devoted to the refutation of the doctrine of Innate Ideas, in the sense just explained, or to the refutation of the claim of any elements in our so-called knowledge to exemption from the criticism which he is about to undertake. All the parts of our knowledge, he insists, have the same rank and the same history. It is difficult to determine against whom the argument is directed, or 'to find any philosopher, then or since, who would deny what Locke maintains.'[2] But when we note Locke's polemical interest in the question, and remember the significance for him of the empirical origin of all the elements of human knowledge, we can afford to disregard the doubtful relevancy of the argument, and be content to see in it an earnest protest against the principle of authority, a vindication of our right to examine critically all the so-called 'principles' of human knowledge.

The elements, data, or materials of knowledge are called by Locke 'ideas,' an idea being defined by him as 'whatsoever is the *object* of the understanding when a man thinks.' In one sense at least, therefore, the measure of our knowledge will be found in the extent and clearness of our ideas. What we actually know, we must have an idea of: that of which we have no idea, or only an obscure and inadequate idea, we cannot know, or can know only inadequately. The limitation of our knowledge will be found in the limitation of our ideas. Hence 'the greater part of a book treating of the understanding will be taken up in considering ideas.' The earlier Books of the *Essay* are devoted to this 'consideration' of ideas, seeking, in a 'historical plain method,' to give an 'account of the ways whereby our understandings come to attain those notions of things we have'; inquiring into 'the original of those *ideas*, notions, or whatever else you please to call them, which a man observes, and is conscious to himself

[1] I. iii. 25. [2] Fraser, *Locke*, in 'Philosophical Classics,' p. 117.

he has in his mind ; and the ways whereby the understanding comes to be furnished with them,' while the investigation of the question 'what *knowledge* the understanding hath by those ideas, and the certainty, evidence, and extent of it,' as well as 'the nature and grounds of *faith* or *opinion*, whereby I mean that assent which we give to any proposition as true, of whose truth yet we have no certain knowledge,' is reserved for the fourth Book. The object of the second Book, in particular, is to give 'a short and, I think, true *history of the first beginnings of human knowledge ;* whence the mind has its first objects ; and by what steps it makes its progress to the laying in and storing up those ideas, out of which is to be framed all the knowledge it is capable of.'[1] 'Having thus given an account of the original, sorts, and extent of our IDEAS, with several other considerations about these (I know not whether I may say) instruments, or materials of our knowledge, the method I at first proposed to myself, would now require that I should immediately proceed to show what use the understanding makes of them, and what KNOWLEDGE we have by them.'[2]

In proceeding to consider Locke's account of the ways by which the understanding comes to be furnished with the ideas which form the materials of all its knowledge, it is important to note the limitation of the inquiry. 'I shall not at present meddle,' he says, 'with the physical consideration of the mind ; or trouble myself to examine wherein its essence consists ; or by what motions of our spirits, or alterations of our bodies, we come to have any *sensation* by our organs, or any *ideas* in our understandings ; and whether those ideas do, in their formation, any or all of them, depend on matter or not. These are speculations which, however curious and entertaining, I shall decline as lying out of my way in the design I am now upon. It shall suffice to my present purpose, to consider the discerning faculties of a man, as they are employed about the objects which they have to do with.'[3] Locke

[1] II. xi. 15. [2] II. xxxiii. 19. [3] Introd., sect. 2.

assumes the existence of external things on the one hand, and of the mind on the other, and the 'operation' of the former upon the latter. How motion in the object and in the sense-organ can produce ideas in the understanding, he does not attempt to explain; he is content to describe the way in which our understandings conceive the relation in question, to accept the facts as they report themselves in the human understanding. Questions of physiological psychology and of metaphysical theory are equally remote from his purpose, at least in the second Book, where he is simply giving an account of the genesis of our ideas and, according to his 'historical plain method,' keeping consistently within the limits of these ideas themselves. What, he virtually asks, are our ideas in their simplest form, and what do these ideas tell us about the understanding on the one hand and about things on the other? The question of the validity or invalidity of that report—the real question of the *Essay*—is reserved for the fourth Book.

The common source of our ideas is found by Locke in experience, in one or other of its two forms, sensation and reflection, or external and internal sense. To illustrate the indebtedness of the understanding to experience for its ideas, he uses two analogies: that of a sheet of white paper, and that of a dark room. 'Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas;—How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the *materials* of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation, employed either about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the *materials* of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the deas we have, or can naturally have, do spring.'[1]

[1] II. i. 2.

'External and internal sensation are the only passages that I can find of knowledge to the understanding. These alone, as far as I can discover, are the windows by which light is let into this *dark room*. For, methinks, the understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible resemblances, or ideas of things without: would the pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the understanding of a man, in reference to all objects of sight, and the ideas of them.'[1]

Taking these two sources of ideas in turn, Locke finds that 'our senses, conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them. And thus we come by those *ideas* we have of *yellow*, *white*, *heat*, *cold*, *soft*, *hard*, *bitter*, *sweet*, and all those which we call sensible qualities; which when I say the senses convey into the mind, I mean, they from external objects convey into the mind what produces there those perceptions. This great source of most of the ideas we have, depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding, I call SENSATION.'[2] 'Secondly, the other fountain, from which experience furnisheth the understanding with ideas, —is the perception of the operations of our own mind within us, as it is employed about the ideas it has got;—which operations, when the soul comes to reflect on and consider, do furnish the understanding with another set of ideas, which could not be had from things without. And such are *perception*, *thinking*, *doubting*, *believing*, *reasoning*, *knowing*, *willing*, and all the different actings of our own minds;—which we being conscious of, and observing in ourselves, do from these receive into our understandings as distinct ideas as we do from bodies affecting our senses. This source of ideas every man has wholly in himself; and though it be not sense, as having nothing to do with external objects, yet it is very like it, and might properly

[1] II. xi. 17. [2] II. i. 3.

enough be called *internal sense.* But as I call the other Sensation, so I call this REFLECTION, the ideas it affords being such only as the mind gets by reflecting on its own operations within itself. By reflection, then, . . . I would be understood to mean, that notice which the mind takes of its own operations, and the manner of them, by reason whereof there come to be ideas of these operations in the understanding.'[1]

It is to the consideration of the ideas of sensation that the inquiry is chiefly devoted. The simple ideas of reflection are divided into two classes: Perception, or Thinking; and Volition, or Willing, and referred to the two 'powers, abilities, or faculties,' called Understanding (in the narrower sense) and Will respectively. The account of the simple ideas of sensation is much more complicated. In this case the idea is always the idea of a quality, which is referred by the mind to a thing. The classification of the ideas is therefore based upon the distinction between the two kinds of qualities of which our ideas inform us, primary and secondary. The primary qualities are extension, figure, solidity, motion or rest, and number; all others are secondary. The former are also called 'real' qualities, since they actually belong to the thing, whether it is perceived or not; while the secondary are called 'imputed' qualities, since they do not really belong to the thing, but depend for their reality upon our perception of them. 'What I have said concerning colours and smells may be understood also of tastes and sounds, and other the like sensible qualities; which, whatever reality we by mistake attribute to them, are in truth nothing in the objects themselves, but powers to produce various sensations in us; and depend on those primary qualities, viz. bulk, figure, texture, and motion of parts.'[2] It follows that the ideas of the primary qualities resemble these qualities as they really exist in the object, 'and their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves'; while in the case of the secondary qualities

[1] II. i. 4. [2] II. viii. 14.

'there is nothing like our ideas, existing in the bodies themselves. They are, in the bodies we denominate from them, only a power to produce those sensations in us; and what is sweet, blue, or warm in idea, is but the certain bulk, figure, and motion of the insensible parts, in the bodies themselves, which we call so.'[1] The secondary qualities, while they are the product of the primary, are yet dependent upon percipient mind for their existence. 'Take away the sensation of them; let not the eyes see light or colours, nor the ears hear sounds; let the palate not taste, nor the nose smell, and all colours, tastes, odours, and sounds, *as they are such particular ideas*, vanish and cease, and are reduced to their causes, *i.e.* bulk, figure, and motion of parts.'[2] So far as real existence goes, that is to say, the qualitative is resolved into the quantitative aspect of things; the qualitative aspect proper has a merely subjective or mental existence. The distinction had been already made by Bacon and Hobbes; but it is made by Locke in a new way, which immediately suggests the characteristically modern and English form of the problem of external reality. Locke's statement of the distinction between the primary and the secondary qualities inevitably suggested Berkeley's further question, How far is the reality of external things mind-dependent? Is the distinction, as Locke has stated it, a real distinction?

As the secondary qualities point to the primary for their explanation, so the primary point to a 'support' or 'substance' in which they inhere and from which they do result. 'The mind being . . . furnished with a great number of the simple ideas, conveyed in by the senses as they are found in exterior things, . . . takes notice also that a certain number of these ideas go constantly together; which being presumed to belong to one thing, . . . are called, so united in one subject, by one name; because, . . . not imagining how these simple ideas *can* subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to

[1] II. viii. 15.

[2] II. viii. 17.

suppose some *substratum* wherein they do subsist, and from which they do result; which therefore we call *substance*. So that if any one will examine himself concerning his notion of pure substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what *support* of such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us; which qualities are commonly called accidents. If any one should be asked, what is the subject wherein colour or weight inheres, he would have nothing to say, but the solid extended parts; and if he were demanded, what is it that solidity and extension inhere in, he would not be in a much better case than the Indian before mentioned who, saying that the world was supported by a great elephant, was asked what the elephant rested on; to which his answer was, a great tortoise: but being again pressed to know what gave support to the broad-backed tortoise, replied—*something, he knew not what*.'[1] The 'obscure and relative idea of *substance in general*,' therefore, is 'nothing but the supposed, but unknown, support of those qualities we find existing.'

This idea of substance in general lies at the basis of our ideas of particular substances, which we acquire 'by collecting *such* combinations of simple ideas as are, by experience and observation of men's senses, taken notice of to exist together; and are therefore supposed to flow from the particular internal constitution, or unknown essence of that substance.'[2] We can never be certain, however, that we have discovered the real collection of qualities which constitutes the 'particular substance' in question, for two reasons: first, because we can never know the 'general substance' or 'support' of the primary qualities; and, secondly, because the primary qualities themselves, upon which the co-existence of the secondary qualities depends, as well as the connexion of the former with the latter qualities, remain in every case beyond our knowledge. The first of these reasons has been sufficiently

[1] II. xxiii. 1, 2. [2] II. xxiii. 3.

explained ; the second is stated in the account of the distinction between the 'real' and the 'nominal' essence in Book III. The former is 'the real internal, but generally (in substances) unknown constitution of things, whereon their discoverable qualities depend ;'[1] the latter is 'the artificial constitution of *genus* and *species*.' There must be some real constitution, on which any collection of simple ideas depends,—'a real, but unknown, constitution of their insensible parts ; from which flow those sensible qualities which serve us to distinguish them from one another, according as we have occasion to rank them into sorts, under common denominations.'[2] Our divisions into genera and species are, therefore, artificial and, so far, unreal ; there is a real foundation for these distinctions and classifications, but we do not know it, or know it only imperfectly. 'The sorting of things by us, or the making of determinate species, being in order to naming and comprehending them under general terms, I cannot see how it can be properly said, that Nature sets the boundaries of the species of things ; or, if it be so, our boundaries of species are not exactly conformable to those in nature. For we, having need of general names for present use, stay not for a perfect discovery of all those qualities which would *best* show us their most material differences and agreements ; but we ourselves divide them, by certain obvious appearances, into species.'[3] Our collection of ideas (the nominal essence) is not identical with the real collection (the real essence). If we knew the inner constitution of things, our idea of any particular substance 'would be as far different from what it now is, as is his who knows all the springs and wheels and other contrivances within of the famous clock at Strasburg, from that which a gazing countryman has of it, who barely sees the motion of the hand, and hears the clock strike, and observes only some of the outward appearances.'[4]

Our idea of spiritual substance is of precisely the same

[1] III. iii. 15.
[2] III. iii. 17.
[3] III. vi. 30.
[4] III. vi. 3.

kind as that of material substance—a *something*, different from material substance, since it is the support of different qualities, namely, 'the operations of the mind,' but equally unknown. So entirely ignorant are we of the nature of both material and spiritual substance that we cannot tell whether they are really the same or different. 'We have the ideas of *matter* and *thinking*, but possibly shall never be able to know whether any mere material being thinks or no; it being impossible for us, by the contemplation of our own ideas, without revelation, to discover whether Omnipotency has not given to some systems of matter, fitly disposed, a power to perceive and think, or else joined and fixed to matter, so disposed, a thinking immaterial substance: it being, in respect of our notions, not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive that God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter *a faculty of thinking*, than that he should superadd to it *another substance with a faculty of thinking*.'[1]

The idea of cause or power is, like that of substance, traced by Locke to experience. We get it both from our ideas of sensation and from reflecting on what passes within the mind itself; in both cases we observe change and, by considering the possibility of change, we come by the idea of power. He thinks, however, that we get a clearer and more distinct idea of active power from reflection on the operations of our own minds than from sensible observation of bodies. 'It seems to me we have, from the observation of the operation of bodies by our senses, but a very imperfect, obscure idea of *active* power; since they afford us not any idea in themselves of the power to begin any action, either motion or thought.'[2]

The 'crucial instance' of Locke's hypothesis of the empirical origin of all our ideas is the idea of Infinity. 'All those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing here: in all that great extent wherein the mind wanders, in those remote speculations it may seem to

[1] IV. iii, 6. [2] II. xxi. 4.

be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond those ideas which *sense* or *reflection* have offered for its contemplation.'[1] Anything that has parts—space, time, or number—is capable of enlargement *ad infinitum*. While, therefore, we have no ideas of infinite space, time, or number, we have a negative idea of the infinity of each of these. The idea of infinity arises directly from the experienced fact of the absence of a limit to the possibilities of imagination or thought in the field of space, time, and number. We thus obtain a 'confused and comparative idea that this is not all, but we may yet go further. . . . So that what lies beyond our positive idea *towards* infinity, lies in obscurity, and has the indeterminate confusion of a negative idea.'[2]

Such is Locke's account of the empirical origin of the ideas which constitute the materials of human knowledge. We must now look at his account of human knowledge itself, its extent and its limits. Though he holds that all our knowledge originates in experience, Locke is not an empiricist. On the contrary, he recognises a rational element in all knowledge, properly so called. Knowledge consists in the perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas, and such perception must be clear or certain. He distinguishes two degrees of knowledge—intuition and demonstration. In the former case, the agreement or disagreement is immediately perceived; in the latter, it is perceived through the mediation of a third idea, but each step in the demonstration is itself an intuition, the agreement or disagreement between the two ideas compared being immediately perceived. This knowledge, however, extends but a little way in matters of real existence; it comprises only two certainties: the existence of ourselves, by intuition, and that of God, by demonstration.

Locke agrees with Descartes that the existence of the self is implied in every state of consciousness. Every element of our experience, every idea of which we are

[1] II. i. 24. [2] II. xvii. 15.

conscious, is a certificate of our own existence, as the subject of that experience, the self that is conscious of that idea. 'As for *our own existence*, we perceive it so plainly and so certainly, that it neither needs nor is capable of any proof. For nothing can be more evident to us than our own existence. I think, I reason, I feel pleasure and pain: can any of these be more evident to me than my own existence? If I doubt of all other things, that very doubt makes me perceive my own existence, and will not suffer me to doubt of that. For if I know I feel pain, it is evident I have as certain perception of my own existence, as of the pain I feel: or if I know I doubt, I have as certain perception of the existence of the thing doubting, as of that thought which I *call doubt*. . . . In every act of sensation, reasoning, or thinking, we are conscious to ourselves of our own being; and, in this matter, come not short of the highest degree of certainty.'[1]

From the certainty of our own existence that of the existence of God immediately follows. This is, according to Locke, 'the most obvious truth that reason discovers'; its evidence is 'equal to mathematical certainty.' Man knows intuitively that he is '*something that actually exists*.' 'In the next place, man knows, by an intuitive certainty, that bare *nothing can no more produce any real being, than it can be equal to two right angles*.' It is, therefore, 'an evident demonstration, that *from eternity there has been something*.' And since all the powers of all beings must be traced to this eternal Being, it follows that it is the most powerful, as well as the most knowing, that is, God. Eternal Mind alone can produce 'thinking, perceiving beings, such as we find ourselves to be.'[2]

Below the rank of knowledge proper, intuitive and demonstrative, Locke recognises a third degree of knowledge, not strictly entitled to the name—our sensitive apprehension of external things, or of real objects other than ourselves and God. 'These two, viz. intuition and demonstration, are the degrees of our *knowledge*;

[1] IV. ix. 3. [2] IV. x.

whatever comes short of one of these, with what assurance soever embraced, is but *faith* or *opinion*, but not knowledge, at least in all general truths. There is, indeed, another perception of the mind, employed about *the particular existence of finite beings without us*, which, going beyond bare probability, and yet not reaching perfectly to either of the foregoing degrees of certainty, passes under the name of *knowledge*. There can be nothing more certain than that the idea we receive from an external object is in our minds: this is intuitive knowledge. But whether there be anything more than barely that idea in our minds; whether we can thence certainly infer the existence of anything without us, which corresponds to that idea, is that whereof some men think there may be a question made; because men may have such ideas in their minds, when no such thing exists, no such object affects their senses.'[1] The difficulty is put elsewhere in a more philosophical form: 'It is evident the mind knows not things immediately, but only by the intervention of the ideas it has of them. Our knowledge, therefore, is real, only so far as there is a *conformity* between our ideas and the reality of things. But what shall be here the criterion? How shall the mind, when it perceives nothing but its own ideas, know that they agree with things themselves?'[2] Does not the very definition of knowledge, as the perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas with one another, preclude the perception of the agreement of ideas with non-ideal reality?

Locke's argument for the objective validity of sensitive knowledge consists of several considerations. In the first place, he urges, our ideas of sensation differ from those of memory and imagination, that is from *mere* ideas, in being produced in us without any action of our own, and therefore 'must necessarily be the product of things operating on the mind, in a natural way, and producing therein those perceptions which by the Wisdom and Will of our Maker they are ordained and adapted to.' They 'carry

[1] IV. ii. 14. [2] IV. iv. 3.

with them all the conformity which is intended ; or which our state requires : for they represent to us things under those appearances which they are fitted to produce in us : whereby we are enabled to distinguish the sorts of particular substances, to discern the states they are in, and so to take them for our necessities, and apply them to our uses.'[1] Secondly, pleasure or pain often accompanies the sensation, and is absent from the idea as it recurs in memory or imagination ; and 'this certainty is as great as our happiness or misery, beyond which we have no concernment to know or to be.'[2] Thirdly, our several senses assist one another's testimony, and thus enable us to predict our sensational experience. On these grounds Locke concludes that 'the certainty of things existing *in rerum natura* when we have the testimony of our senses for it is not only as great as our frame can attain to, but as our condition needs. For, our faculties being suited not to the full extent of being, nor to a perfect, clear, comprehensive knowledge of things free from all doubt and scruple ; but to the preservation of us, in whom they are ; and accommodated to the use of life : they serve to our purpose well enough, if they will but give us certain notice of those things, which are convenient or inconvenient to us.'[3] The certainty which Locke attributes to sensitive knowledge is thus seen to be practical, rather than theoretical ; and it is impossible to distinguish this degree of knowledge from the belief or opinion which results from a balance of probabilities rather than from certain perception.

But even granting that our sensitive apprehension of external reality possesses the certainty which is the characteristic of knowledge, as distinguished from mere opinion, we must observe within how very narrow limits it is confined. 'When our senses do actually convey into our understandings any idea, we cannot but be satisfied that there doth something *at that time* really exist without us, which doth affect our senses, and by them give notice of

[1] IV. iv. 4. [2] IV. ii. 14. [3] IV. xi. 8.

itself to our apprehensive faculties, and actually produce that idea which we then perceive: and we cannot so far distrust their testimony, as to doubt that such *collections* of simple ideas as we have observed by our senses to be united together, do really exist together. But this knowledge extends as far as the present testimony of our senses, employed about particular objects that do then effect them, and no further.'[1] We cannot demonstrate the necessity of the co-existence of those ideas which constitute the modes or qualities of substances; we cannot perceive their 'necessary connexion or repugnancy.' The connexion between the secondary and the primary qualities remains inscrutable. 'And therefore there are very few general propositions to be made concerning substances, which carry with them undoubted certainty.'[2] 'Our knowledge in all these inquiries reaches very little further than our experience.'[3] Beyond the strict warrant of experience, or the testimony of our senses, we may venture upon 'opinion' or 'judgment' as to the co-existence of the qualities of substances, but we cannot strictly 'know.' 'Possibly inquisitive and observing men may, by strength of judgment, penetrate further, and, on probabilities taken from wary observation, and hints well laid together, often guess right at what experience has not yet discovered to them. But this is but guessing still; it amounts only to opinion, and has not that certainty which is requisite to knowledge.'[4]

Locke finds himself compelled, therefore, to conclude that the so-called 'science' of which Bacon had talked so proudly, and of whose achievements he had himself spoken so respectfully in the opening pages of the *Essay*, is not, in the strict sense, science at all; that, in his own words, there can be 'no science of bodies.' It is vain to search for the 'forms' of the various material substances, or to seek to verify 'the corpuscularian hypothesis' as to the connexion of the primary and the secondary qualities of things. 'I am apt to doubt that, how

[1] IV. xi. 9.
[2] IV. vi. 7.
[3] IV. iii. 13, 14.
[4] IV. vi. 13.

far soever human industry may advance useful and experimental philosophy in physical things, *scientifical* will still be out of our reach. . . . *Certainty* and *demonstration* are things we must not, in these matters, pretend to.'[1] 'And therefore we shall do no injury to our knowledge, when we modestly think with ourselves, that we are so far from being able to comprehend the whole nature of the universe, and all things contained in it, that we are not capable of a philosophical knowledge of the bodies that are about us, and make a part of us: concerning their secondary qualities, powers, and operations, we can have no universal certainty. . . . In these we can go no further than particular experience informs us of matter of fact, and by analogy to guess what effects the like bodies are, upon other trials, like to produce. But as to a *perfect science* of natural bodies, (not to mention spiritual beings), we are, I think, so far from being capable of any such thing, that I conclude it lost labour to seek after it.'[2] In that 'experience and history' to which Bacon had looked as merely the preparation for scientific insight into the 'forms' of things, and which Hobbes had still more disparaged, Locke accordingly sees the only legitimate occupation of physical inquiry. 'This way of *getting and improving our knowledge in substances only by experience and history*, which is all that the weakness of our faculties in this state of mediocrity which we are in in this world can attain to, makes me suspect that *natural philosophy is not capable of being made a science*. We are able, I imagine, to reach very little general knowledge concerning the species of bodies, and their several properties. Experiments and historical observations we may have, from which we may draw advantages of ease and health, and thereby increase our stock of conveniences for this life; but beyond this I fear our talents reach not, nor are our faculties, as I guess, able to advance.'[3]

If we cannot attain to a science of bodies, still less can we expect 'scientifical' understanding of spirits. Spiritual

[1] IV. iii. 26. [2] IV. iii. 29. [3] IV. xii. 10.

substance is, as we have seen, as unknown as material substance; and Locke finds additional reasons for limiting our knowledge in this sphere. 'If we are at a loss in respect of the powers and operations of bodies, I think it is easy to conclude we are much more in the dark in reference to spirits; whereof we naturally have no ideas but what we draw from that of our own, by reflecting on the operations of our own souls within us, as far as they come within our observation. But how inconsiderable a rank the spirits that inhabit our bodies hold amongst those various and possibly innumerable kinds of nobler beings; and how far short they come of the endowments and perfections of cherubim and seraphim, and infinite sorts of spirits above us, is what by a transient hint in another place I have offered to my reader's consideration.'[1]

Our knowledge of 'sensible matters of facts,' or of the coexistence of the ideas which represent the qualities of substances, being thus confined to the particulars of experience, we must look elsewhere for that knowledge which is at once general and real. It is found in those complex ideas other than those of substances, which, 'being archetypes of the mind's own making, not intended to be the copies of anything, nor referred to the existence of anything, as to their originals, cannot want any conformity necessary to real knowledge.'[2] Here we have to do not with the relations of ideas to reality or to matters of fact, but simply with the relations of ideas to one another. Of this kind of knowledge Locke regards mathematics as the type. 'I doubt not but it will be easily granted that the knowledge we have of mathematical truths is not only certain, but real knowledge; and not the bare empty vision of vain, insignificant chimeras of the brain: and yet, if we will consider, we shall find that it is only of our own ideas.'[3] It is with ideal figures and quantities, not with actual things, that the

[1] IV. iii. 17. [2] IV. iv. 5. [3] IV. iv. 6.

mathematician is concerned. Locke holds, however, that such general, yet certain knowledge is found in all similar relations of ideas, in all similarly ideal sciences, and more particularly, in ethics, 'our moral ideas, as well as mathematical, being archetypes themselves, and so adequate and complete ideas.'[1] 'The idea of a supreme Being, infinite in power, goodness, and wisdom, whose workmanship we are, and on whom we depend; and the idea of ourselves, as understanding, rational creatures, being such as are clear in us, would, I suppose, if duly considered and pursued, afford such foundations of our duty and rules of action as might place *morality* amongst the *sciences capable of demonstration*: wherein I doubt not but from self-evident propositions, by necessary consequences, as incontestable as those in mathematics, the measures of right and wrong might be made out to any one that will apply himself with the same indifferency and attention to the one as he does to the other of these sciences'.[2]

The *Essay* closes, as it began, with the note of the practical and the useful. The sharp limitation of human knowledge should teach the lesson of contentment with probability, where certainty is unattainable. 'The understanding faculties being given to man, not barely for speculation, but also for the conduct of his life, man would be at a great loss if he had nothing to direct him but what has the certainty of true *knowledge*. For that being very short and scanty, as we have seen, he would be often utterly in the dark, and in most of the actions of his life perfectly at a stand, had he nothing to guide him in the absence of clear and certain knowledge. He that will not eat till he has demonstration that it will nourish him; he that will not stir till he infallibly knows that the business he goes about will succeed, will have little else to do but to sit still and perish. Therefore, as God has set some things in broad daylight; as he has given us some

[1] IV. iv. 7. [2] IV. iii. 18.

certain knowledge, though limited to a few things in comparison, probably as a taste of what intellectual creatures are capable of, to excite in us a desire and endeavour after a better state: so, in the greatest part of our concernments, he has afforded us only the twilight, as I may so say, of probability; suitable, I presume, to that state of mediocrity and probationership he has been pleased to place us in here; wherein, to check our over-confidence and presumption, we might, by every day's experience, be made sensible of our short-sightedness and liableness to error; the sense whereof might be a constant admonition to us, to spend the days of this our pilgrimage with industry and care, in the searching and following of that way which might lead us to a state of greater perfection. It being highly rational to think, even were revelation silent in the case, that, as men employ those talents God has given them here, they shall accordingly receive their rewards at the close of the day, when their sun shall set, and night shall put an end to their labours.'[1]

The closing chapters of Book IV. are accordingly devoted to a consideration of that kind of apprehension of reality which Locke calls 'judgment,' as distinguished from 'knowledge.' 'The faculty which God has given man to supply the want of clear and certain knowledge, in cases where that cannot be had, is *judgment*: whereby the mind takes its ideas to agree or disagree; or, which is the same, any proposition to be true or false, without perceiving a demonstrative evidence in the proofs.'[2] So-called 'scientific' truths being generally of this kind, as we have seen, one would have expected Locke to give here some account of the procedure of inductive science, some directions for the careful and methodical study of the facts, and cautions against the temptations to hasty and unwarranted generalisation, such as we find in Bacon's *Novum Organum*. But instead of this, he contents himself with general observations on the degrees of assent, on

[1] IV. xiv. 1, 2.

[2] IV. xiv. 3.

reason (and syllogism), on faith and reason, on 'enthusiasm,' and on wrong assent, or error. The treatment of Judgment, that is to say, is limited to general considerations regarding the function of faith and the relations of faith and reason as guides of the human mind.

What is specially significant here is Locke's refusal to oppose faith and reason in the fashion of Bacon and Hobbes, his refusal to accept any authority which cannot vindicate itself at the bar of reason. Even in his insistence upon the necessity of supplementing our knowledge by faith, Locke remains a rationalist. 'Faith is nothing but a firm assent of the mind: which, if it be regulated, as is our duty, cannot be afforded to anything but upon good reason; and so cannot be opposite to it. He that believes without having any reason for believing, may be in love with his own fancies; but neither seeks truth as he ought, nor pays the obedience due to his Maker, who would have him use those discerning faculties he has given him, to keep him out of mistake and error. . . . He governs his assent right, and places it as he should, who, in any case or matter whatsoever, believes or disbelieves according as reason directs him. He that doth otherwise, transgresses against his own light, and misuses those faculties which were given him to no other end, but to search and follow the clearer evidence and greater probability.'[1] Locke is at one with the rationalist theologians of his century in their antagonism to an 'enthusiasm' which would substitute for the insight of reason and of rational faith the so-called 'revelation' of private experience. He speaks of '*a third ground of assent*, which with some men has the same authority, and is as confidently relied on as either faith or reason; I mean *enthusiasm*: which, laying by reason, would set up revelation without it. Whereby in effect it takes away both reason and revelation, and substitutes in the room of them the ungrounded fancies of a man's own brain, and assumes them for a foundation both of opinion and

[1] IV. xvii. 24.

conduct.'[1] As against such a view, he insists upon the necessity of judging revelation by reason. 'He, therefore, that will not give himself up to all the extravagances of delusion and error must bring this guide of his *light within* to the trial. God when he makes the prophet does not unmake the man. He leaves all his faculties in the natural state, to enable him to judge of his inspirations, whether they be of *divine* original or no. When he illuminates the mind with supernatural light, he does not extinguish that which is natural. If he would have us assent to the truth of any proposition, he either evidences that truth by the usual methods of natural reason, or else makes it known to be a truth which he would have us assent to by his authority, and convinces us that it is from him, by some marks which reason cannot be mistaken in. *Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything.*'[2]

Yet reason clearly limits the field of its own insight; it is only reasonable to believe where we cannot know and yet must act. We have seen that it was the 'difficulties concerning morality and revealed religion' that were the occasion of the inquiry concerning human understanding. The result of that inquiry is that the human understanding is not commensurate with reality, that our line is too short to sound the depths of the vast ocean of being, that the interests of morality and religion cannot be compassed by the reason of man, and that knowledge must be supplemented by faith if man is to fulfil his divine destiny. This is the point of view, not only of the closing chapters of the *Essay*, but of the treatise on the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, published five years later. The aim of this treatise was to recall men from the contentions of the theological schools to the simplicity of the gospel as the rule of human life. 'The writers and wranglers in religion fill it with niceties, and dress it up with notions, which they make necessary and fundamental parts of it; as if there were no way into the church, but through the

[1] IV. xix. 3.

[2] IV. xix. 14.

academy or lyceum. The greatest part of mankind have not leisure for learning and logic, and superfine distinctions of the schools.'[1] What men need is not intellectual insight or theological dogma, but practical guidance. Locke seems less confident than he was in the *Essay* of the possibility of a rational science of morals. 'It should seem, by the little that has hitherto been done in it, that it is too hard a task for unassisted reason to establish morality, in all its parts, upon its true foundation, with a clear and convincing light. . . . It is plain, in fact, that human reason unassisted failed men in its great and proper business of morality. It never from unquestionable principles, by clear deductions, made out an entire body of the "law of nature." And he that shall collect all the moral rules of the philosophers, and compare them with those contained in the new testament, will find them to come short of the morality delivered by our Saviour, and taught by his apostles; a college made up, for the most part, of ignorant, but inspired fishermen.'[2]

Though Locke never himself attempted the construction of such a rational science of ethics as he had foreshadowed in the *Essay*, he did, in the second of the two *Treatises of Government*, attempt the formulation of a theory of political obligation. The immediate object of these political treatises was to disprove the theory of the divine and absolute right of the Monarch, as it had been formulated in Filmer's *Patriarcha*, and to establish on theoretical grounds the righteousness of the Revolution; 'to establish the throne of our great restorer, our present king William; to make good his title in the consent of the people . . . and to justify to the world the people of England, whose love of their just and natural rights, with their resolution to preserve them, saved the nation when it was on the very brink of slavery and ruin.'[3] In showing, in the second of these treatises, 'the true original, extent, and end of civil government,' Locke bases his

[1] Works, 8th ed., iii. 98, 99. [2] Works, iii. 87, 88.
[3] Preface.

argument, in the main, upon the principles already insisted upon by Hooker in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, and his appeal is always to the 'just and natural rights' which are presupposed in civil society and which it is the function of government to defend from encroachment. For Locke, as for Hooker, the fundamental laws of the political society are the expression of those 'laws of nature' which antedate the State and its legislation. 'The law of nature stands as an eternal rule to all men, legislators as well as others.'[1] Holding that men are 'by nature, all free, equal, and independent,'[2] and that 'the power of the society, or legislative constituted by them, can never be supposed to extend further than the common good,'[3] Locke, like Hobbes, finds the origin of the State in a contract. He distinguishes, however, the act by which political society is constituted from the act by which the 'legislative' or government is established. 'The legislative' is only the representative of the people, and is responsible to the people whom it represents for the faithful discharge of the trust committed to it. Government is 'a trust that is put in them by the society and the law of God and nature.'[4] 'The legislative being only a fiduciary power to act for certain ends, there remains still "in the people the supreme power to remove or alter the legislative," when they find the legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them.'[5] The exercise of this supreme power directly by the people itself implies the dissolution of government; it means, in other words, revolution. The supreme power, at such a crisis, 'reverts to the society, and the people have a right to act as supreme, and continue the legislative in themselves; or erect a new form, or under the old form place it in new hands, as they think good.'[6] To the hard question, 'Who shall be judge, whether the prince or legislative act contrary to their trust?' Locke boldly replies: 'The people shall be judge; for who shall judge whether his trustee or

[1] Sect. 35.
[2] Sect. 95.
[3] Sect. 131.
[4] Sect. 142.
[5] Sect. 149.
[6] Sect. 243.

deputy acts well, and according to the trust reposed in him, but he who deputes him, and must, by having deputed him, have still a power to discard him, when he fails in his trust?'[1]

An all-important part of that civil liberty of which Locke was so ardent an advocate is religious liberty, or liberty of conscience. This, he thinks, has not yet been sufficiently vindicated, and he is in full sympathy with the plea for toleration which had been so earnestly made by such theologians as Chillingworth and Jeremy Taylor, as well as by the Cambridge Platonists, whose aversion to dogmatic intolerance he fully shares. 'We have need of more generous remedies than what have yet been made use of in our distemper. It is neither Declarations of Indulgence nor Acts of Comprehension, such as yet have been practised or projected amongst us, that can do the work. The first will but palliate, the second increase our evil.'[2] What is needed is 'equal and impartial liberty,' and this can be secured only by the absolute separation of the sphere of the Church from that of the State. The State has properly to do only with the temporal well-being of the individual; his spiritual and eternal welfare is the concern of the Church alone. So long as the Church keeps within its own province, there can be no conflict between ecclesiastical and civil authority. It is only when the Church usurps the place of the State, and interferes with the individual's civil allegiance, as in the case of the Church of Rome, that the State is compelled to assert its authority. Here Locke finds the limit of the principle of toleration, as well as in the case of any church which is itself intolerant and in that of the atheistic dissolution of the social order itself. In all other cases the principle of toleration is absolutely valid. The opposite principle inevitably defeats its own purpose, since not only has the individual an indefeasible right to religious freedom, but he cannot really be constrained in his religious life. The State is able by its coercion to pro-

[1] Sect. 240.

[2] 'To the Reader.'

duce hypocrites; it cannot dictate to the free spirit of the individual in that inner conduct of his spiritual life which is alone rightly called religion.

It is usual with literary critics to condemn Locke as a writer devoid of style. Mr. Gosse, for example, speaks of the *Essay* as 'a work particularly unengaging in its mere style and delivery,'[1] and of its author as 'the most innocent of style' of all English philosophers. 'As a mere writer he may be said to exhibit the prose of the Restoration in its most humdrum form. . . . His style is prolix, dull, and without elevation; he expresses himself with perfect clearness indeed, but without variety or charm of any kind. He seems to have a contempt for all the arts of literature, and passes on from sentence to sentence like a man talking aloud in his study, and intent only on making the matter in hand perfectly clear to himself.'[2] Mr. Gosse acknowledges that 'this is not the universal view,' and that 'it is usual to speak of the home-spun style of Locke as "forcible," "incisive," and even "ingenious."' That it possesses at least these qualities must, I think, have been proved to the reader by the quotations made in the course of this chapter. But I should be inclined to claim more than this; for while Locke is certainly careless as to the literary form of his argument, and often dull and tedious through his habitual reiterativeness, his style has an individuality, and even a distinction, which are appreciated only through long familiarity with his writing; and that he can on occasion rise to real beauty and eloquence of literary expression is shown by such a passage as the following: 'The memory of some men, it is true, is very tenacious, even to a miracle. But yet there seems to be a constant decay of all our ideas, even of those which are stuck deepest, and in minds the most retentive; so that if they be not sometimes renewed, by repeated exercise of the senses, or reflection on those kinds of objects which at first occasioned them,

[1] *Eighteenth Century Literature*, p. 73. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

the print wears out, and at last there remains nothing to be seen. Thus the ideas, as well as children, of our youth, often die before us: and our minds represent to us those tombs to which we are approaching; where, though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions are effaced by time, and the imagery moulders away.'[1]

[1] *Essay*, II. x. 5.

PART II

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The problem of the English philosophers of the eighteenth century is set for them by Locke's account of human knowledge. In place of the efforts which occupy the great philosophic minds of the seventeenth century to construct a system of the sciences, a universal scheme of things, such as we find Bacon and Hobbes attempting, their work is controlled by the necessity of answering the previous question, first raised by Locke, of the nature and the limits of human knowledge. The theory of knowledge leads, it is true, in Berkeley's hands, immediately to a corresponding theory of reality. Locke's supposition of an unknown and unknowable substance underlying the known objects, or the objects so far as they enter into human experience, having been discovered to be an unmeaning abstraction, if not a self-contradictory conception, material reality is identified with the complex of sensations, and an idealistic theory is substituted for the crude realism which resulted from the Lockian theory of knowledge; the two substances of Locke are reduced to the one spiritual substance of Berkeley. But Hume, following out the same path, prescribed by Locke—the path of experience as opposed to that of abstract thought, the path of criticism as distinguished from that of uncritical prejudgment, is confronted once more with Locke's problem of the nature and limits of knowledge, and finds that spiritual substance is no less unmeaning and contradictory than material; that, as the *esse* of things is *percipi*, the *esse* of mind is *percipere*; that the self, like the

not-self, is but a complex of ideas or states of consciousness. For Hume, moreover, as already in part for Berkeley, the problem of knowledge changes its aspect from the problem of substance to that of cause. Berkeley insists upon the impotence of matter, even more than upon its mind-dependent character; but he is no less confident than Locke himself that in spirit, whether human or divine, we find the true fountain of causal energy or power. Hume finds no greater validity in spiritual than in material causes; in both cases alike the fact of experience is constant or uniform succession, and the necessary connexion which we attribute to the relation of cause and effect is discovered to be merely a subjective habit or custom which results from the tendency to associate events constantly conjoined in our experience, not an objective characteristic of reality. The result of the further investigation of the problem of knowledge, on the empirical lines suggested by Locke himself, is thus the sceptical reduction of knowledge and certainty to mere opinion and probability: no science or certain knowledge, whether of minds or bodies, is attainable by man.

This sceptical result of the Lockian empiricism recalls attention to the rational constitution of knowledge, which Locke had rather assumed than proved; and we find Reid, the founder of the Scottish philosophy of Common Sense, insisting upon the rational elements which are presupposed in all knowledge and in human experience as we have it. At the end as at the beginning of the century the all-important problem of philosophy is the problem of knowledge.

In the ethical sphere, the problem is really set by Hobbes, the unmitigated egoism of whose theory is opposed by the 'moral sense' school, whose teaching, as developed by Hume, occasions the attempts of Hartley and Adam Smith to explain the moral sense by association and sympathy, of Tucker and Paley to reduce virtue to utility, and of Price to establish morality on a rational basis.

CHAPTER I

BERKELEY: THE NEW IDEALISM

The pre-eminent merits of Berkeley as a philosophical writer are acknowledged by all competent judges. It will be sufficient here to mention a single critic, Mr. Gosse, who designates him as 'perhaps the most exquisite writer of English in his generation,' and 'one of the most exquisite writers of English prose.' Among the writers of that time, 'it may perhaps be said that there is not one who is quite his equal in style; his prose is distinguished as well for dignity and fulness of phrase, as for splendour and delicacy of diction, without effeminacy.'[1] For grace as well as lucidity of expression, Berkeley is unrivalled among English philosophers. He is, moreover, a master of that most difficult form of prose writing, the dialogue. In the dramatic movement or 'action' of the dialogue, and in the characterisation of the interlocutors, his dialogues, especially the *Alciphron* series, remind us forcibly of Plato.

It is not so easy to determine his real significance as a philosopher. His writings are dominated throughout by a frankly confessed religious or theological purpose, which becomes only more pronounced and engrossing as we pass from his earlier to his later works. His great foes, from first to last, are 'Scepticism,' 'Atheism,' and that 'Materialism' in which he sees their common philosophical basis. Of the *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, his first-published work, we find him writing (to Sir John

[1] *History of Eighteenth Century Literature*, pp. 96, 203.

Percival): 'In a little time I hope to make what is there laid down appear subservient to the ends of morality and religion.' In the *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, published in the following year, the reader is told, on the title-page, that 'the chief causes of Error and Difficulty in the Sciences, with the grounds of Scepticism, Atheism, and Irreligion, are inquired into.' The *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* are intended to show, among other things, 'the Immediate Providence of a Deity, in opposition to Sceptics and Atheists.' The writings of the second period, that of middle life, are more exclusively dominated by this theological purpose. *Alciphron or the Minute Philosopher* is entitled 'an Apology for the Christian Religion, against those who are called Free-thinkers.' In *Siris*, the latest product of Berkeley's reflection, the religious, if not the theological, interest is supreme. The mood is often more mystical than philosophical, and his sympathies have been greatly widened, but he is as much concerned as ever to determine what, in philosophical thought, is and is not 'Atheism.' It cannot be denied, moreover, that he betrays, especially in his prolonged controversy with the deists of his time, a real unfairness which leads him seriously to misrepresent the aims and arguments of his opponents. This biassed and unsympathetic attitude is apparent even in his discussion of Locke's doctrine of 'abstract ideas' in the Introduction to the *Principles*, and is too characteristic to be ascribed, as it is too generously by Professor Campbell Fraser, to his natural 'impetuosity' in controversy. It is a serious flaw in the polemics of an author whose aims are so worthy and whose ability as a controversialist ought to have saved him from any such temptation.

It is a strange irony of fate that a philosophy whose chief aim was the refutation of scepticism should itself have come to be regarded as simply a link in the chain of sceptical reasoning connecting Locke with Hume, so that Berkeley is simply an incomplete Hume, and Hume simply a Berkeley who has learned the implications of his

own philosophy. So far as the history of philosophy is concerned, so far as Berkeley's philosophy has really influenced his successors, it is summed up in his Immaterialism, or his refutation of Locke's doctrine of the substantial or independent existence of material things or the objects of sense-perception. By following out Locke's own 'new way of ideas,' he found himself forced to the conclusion that only particular things exist; and since the particular thing is always a complex of sensations, and there is no essential difference between the so-called primary and the secondary qualities, both being alike mind-dependent, Locke's 'material substance' not only loses its significance, but becomes a self-contradictory or inconceivable conception. Since, moreover, ideas are essentially passive, and cannot strictly cause, but merely signify, one another; since the only cause, as well as the only substance, is found in the spiritual sphere, it follows that the explanation of things in terms of material or mechanical causes is no real explanation at all. So far as ideas go, therefore—and Berkeley is only following out Locke's own maxim that the elements of all knowledge are ideas—we have no knowledge either of material substance or of material cause. Hume has only to take the final step to reach the sceptical goal of the new way of ideas. He has only to point out that the same criticism which Berkeley applied to Locke's material substance and material cause applies to spiritual substance and spiritual cause, to reach his sceptical dissolution of all real knowledge. If we can explain only in terms of substance and cause, and if both of these explanations are invalidated, then reality becomes for us inexplicable, a mere enigma.

Nor is this historical interpretation of the significance of Berkeley's philosophy really, on the whole, unjust. He spent his best strength and did his real work in the destructive criticism of Locke's account of external reality; his own doctrine of Immaterialism is his real contribution to English philosophy and, indirectly if not directly, to European philosophy. The work of reconstruction, to which in his own mind this destructive criticism was always

subordinate, is comparatively ineffective. His doctrine of the 'notion,' as distinguished from the 'idea,' was never developed with anything like the clearness which belonged to his development of Locke's doctrine of ideas into its negative consequences for the Lockian doctrine of material reality. The existence of the self, of other selves, and of God is rather assumed than proved. We cannot resist the conclusion that Berkeley's positive or spiritual doctrine rests rather upon common sense or religious faith than upon a reasoned philosophy. The years of middle age were too busy with practical and philanthropic activities to permit of any resumption of the strenuous philosophical effort of his youth; their absorbing intellectual interest was the defence of the faith from the attacks of deists and 'free-thinkers.' And when at last he comes, in *Siris*, to gather up the final results of his 'philosophical Reflexions and Inquiries,' pursued in the quiet closing years at Cloyne, what he gives us is rather an eclectic philosophy culled from the ancient writers, especially Plato and the Neo-Platonists, something between a metaphysical idealism of the Platonic type and a mysticism of the Neo-Platonic sort, than a systematic development of his earlier immaterialism into a spiritual realism or rational idealism.

Yet, though the philosophy of Berkeley may justly be regarded as only a splendid fragment, rather than a completely developed system of thought, we must not minimise its real importance, which is much greater than such a representation would suggest. Professor Fraser has truly said of 'the new conception of matter presented by Berkeley' that 'its consequences justify us in regarding it as one of the conceptions that mark epochs, and become springs of spiritual progress'[1] His philosophic genius may be said to have spent itself in a single flash of insight, in the clear apprehension of one great truth about external reality and man's knowledge of it; but so brilliant is this one achievement, so epoch-making is its importance, not only for the sceptical reduction of Lockian

[1] *Selections from Berkeley*, Introd., p. xiii.

principles in Hume, but for the subsequent movement of philosophical reconstruction in Kant and his successors, that it is not too much to say that Berkeley is the founder of modern idealism, and that the ability to appreciate and to assimilate his conception of external reality may be taken as a 'touchstone of metaphysical sagacity.' For it was Berkeley who first discovered the alternative of a spiritual monism to the dualism alike of the Lockian and of the Cartesian philosophy; who first ventured the affirmation that the *esse* of material and extended things is *percipi*, that the primary reality is spiritual and the reality of the material world mind-dependent; that matter and extension are neither substantial nor attributes, co-ordinate with thought, of one ultimate substance, but in their very nature subordinate to thought and the thinking mind. And if Locke had already hinted that true agency is to be found only in the spiritual sphere, it was Berkeley who first clearly apprehended the essentially passive and impotent character of material 'forces,' and pointed persistently to mind or will as the one true cause. It was Berkeley who first in modern philosophy discovered the importance of the *subject* for knowledge; who first clearly saw that, so far from its being the function of the knowing mind to reproduce an object presented to it from without, the object is dependent for its very existence upon the knowing subject. This discovery of the true importance of the subject is the very mark of modern as distinguished from ancient idealism, of the idealism of Kant and Hegel as distinguished from that of Plato and Aristotle. And if, in the light of later reflection and deeper insight, Berkeley's account of reality appears naïve and fragmentary, it is yet not difficult to recognise in his simple words the essential message of later idealism. 'Some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, viz. that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind; that their *being* is to be perceived or known;

that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind, or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit: it being perfectly unintelligible, and involving all the absurdity of abstraction, to attribute to any single part of them an existence independent of a spirit.'[1]

We learn from Berkeley's Commonplace Book, written from time to time during his undergraduate years at Trinity College, Dublin, that the great formative influence of his youth was Locke's *Essay* which, through the influence of Molyneux, had been prescribed as a text-book at Dublin, and appears to have excited this student at any rate to independent critical activity. To appreciate Berkeley's criticism, it is important to recall just how far Locke himself had gone in the direction of idealising reality, how far he had himself followed out his new way of ideas. He had proclaimed that our knowledge of reality consists of ideas and is, therefore, mind-dependent. But he had at the same time recognised a non-ideal and independent aspect of reality, and distinguished the secondary qualities, as merely ideal, from the primary, as having both an ideal and a real, or independent, existence. The secondary qualities, he had insisted, are reducible to the primary, however mysterious the connexion between the former and the latter may be. Finally, he had postulated two kinds of substance as the *substrata* of the ideas of sensation and the ideas of reflection respectively, and held that, in some to us unintelligible way, the material substance operates upon the spiritual, and produces in it those ideas which correspond to the real qualities of material things.

Now Berkeley argues that this Lockian theory of a merely partial equivalence between the ideal and the real object, this postulation of a non-ideal and, in its substantial reality, unknowable object, is not merely superfluous but

[1] *Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 6.

unmeaning. The only object of which we can speak intelligently is the object as we know it, that is, the object which consists in ideas or sensations. To speak of ideas as corresponding to or resembling non-ideal objects, is absurd: an idea can only resemble an idea. The distinction between ideas and real things makes real knowledge impossible, and leads inevitably to scepticism; since, in that case, we know only relations of ideas to one another, never the relation of ideas to things. 'The referring ideas to things which are not ideas, the using the term "idea of," is one great cause of mistake.'[1] 'How can you compare any things besides your own ideas?'[2] 'This, which, if I mistake not, hath been shown to be a most groundless and absurd notion, is the very root of Scepticism; for, so long as men thought that real things subsisted without the mind, and that their knowledge was only so far forth *real* as it was *conformable to real things*, it follows they could not be certain that they had any real knowledge at all. For how can it be known that the things which are perceived are conformable to those which are not perceived, or exist without the mind?'[3] Locke had himself admitted that the secondary qualities exist only in the mind that perceives them. The same reasons ought to have led him to see that the so-called 'primary' qualities are also exclusively mental, and therefore that the only reality of which we can intelligently speak is mind-dependent or ideal, that the *esse* of all material things is *percipi*.

Locke had attributed our ignorance of the real essence of things to the imperfection of our human faculties; he had accounted for the limitations of our knowledge by reference to the practical uses which it is intended to serve and for which, in spite of its theoretic inadequacy, it is entirely sufficient. In Berkeley's judgment it is not the defect of our faculties, but our misuse of them, that is the cause of our ignorance of reality. 'It is said the faculties we have are few, and those designed by nature

[1] Works, i. 35.
[2] Works, i. 82.
[3] *Principles*, sect. 86.

for the support and pleasure of life, and not to penetrate into the inward essence and constitution of things. . . . But, perhaps, we may be too partial to ourselves in placing the fault originally in our faculties, and not rather in the wrong use we make of them. . . . Upon the whole, I am inclined to think that the far greater part, if not all, of those difficulties which have hitherto amused philosophers, and blocked up the way to knowledge, are entirely owing to ourselves. We have first raised a dust, and then complain we cannot see.'[1] The great obstacle to knowledge is found by Berkeley, as it was found by Locke, in the misuse of words, in the substitution of words for ideas. It is 'the mist and veil of words' that has chiefly obscured from us the true nature of reality. All our ideas are really particular and concrete; it is only because we have been content to accept words in place of ideas that we have imagined the possibility of 'abstract' general ideas. Locke himself has been the victim of such verbalism and abstraction; for what else is his 'material substance' but an abstract idea, or a mere word which represents no idea at all?

The discussion of abstract ideas, to which Berkeley devotes the Introduction to the *Principles*, is calculated to produce a wrong impression both of Locke's views and of his own. Using the term 'idea' in a much narrower sense than that in which Locke had used it, he has no difficulty in convicting Locke of absurdities of thought which are entirely foreign to his actual views. For Locke an idea is 'whatsoever is the *object* of the understanding when a man thinks': hence he uses it 'to express whatever is meant by *phantasm*, *notion*, *species*, or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking.'[2] For Berkeley 'idea' means, as Professor Fraser says, 'object presented to the senses, or represented in imagination.'[3] An abstract idea, therefore, he has no difficulty in showing, is a contradiction in terms, since it is equivalent to an abstract image. It is impossible to imagine colour

[1] *Principles*, Introd., sects. 2, 3.
[2] *Essay*, Introd., sect. 8.
[3] *Selections*, 5th ed., p. 11, note 2.

in general, or a triangle which is neither equilateral, isosceles, nor scalenon. But it does not follow that it is impossible to think of colour in general or of a triangle in general, or that abstract ideas, in the sense of general ideas or thoughts, are impossible. Berkeley, in his Commonplace Book, notes that there is 'a great difference between *considering* length without breadth, and having an *idea*, or *imagining* length without breadth.'[1] And while it has often been inferred from his argument against abstract ideas that Berkeley was a strict nominalist, and denied the validity of universals or concepts, the truth is that he explicitly affirms his belief in the possibility of general, as distinguished from abstract ideas, and in doing so parts company with strict nominalism and, in his doctrine of conceptualism, leaves open the possibility, if indeed he does not imply the necessity, of realism in the only sense in which such a doctrine is now held. While all ideas are, in themselves, particular, any idea may acquire generality by being used to represent other particular ideas or the element common to a number of particular ideas. 'It is, I know, a point much insisted on, that all knowledge and demonstration are about universal notions, to which I fully agree. But then it does not appear to me that those notions are formed by abstraction in the manner premised—*universality*, so far as I can comprehend, not consisting in the absolute, positive nature or conception of anything, but in the relation it bears to the particulars signified or represented by it; by virtue whereof it is that things, names, or notions, being in their own nature *particular*, are *rendered universal*. Thus, when I demonstrate any proposition concerning triangles, it is supposed that I have in view the universal idea of a triangle: which ought not to be understood as if I could frame an *idea* of a triangle which was neither equilateral, nor scalenon, nor equicrural; but only that the particular triangle I consider, whether of this or that sort it matters not, doth equally stand for and represent all rectilineal triangles whatsoever, and is

[1] Works, i. 78.

in that sense universal. All which seems very plain and not to include any difficulty in it.'[1] 'It must be acknowledged that a man may *consider* a figure merely as triangular; without attending to the particular qualities of the angles, or relations of the sides. *So far he may abstract.* . . . In like manner we may consider Peter so far forth as man, or so far forth as animal, without framing the aforementioned abstract idea, either of man or of animal; inasmuch as all that is perceived is not considered.'[2] It does not belong to Berkeley's polemical purpose in the discussion to develop the realistic implications of his position, or to show how it is that an idea, in itself particular, is qualified to represent other particular ideas of the same class. The abstract terms which he is concerned to invalidate are *merely* general. Of these the great example is Locke's abstract 'Matter,' from which all particular, and therefore all general, qualities have been removed. Against such an 'abstract idea' as this his criticism is completely cogent.

If, then, we are not to content ourselves with mere meaningless words, if the word 'Matter' is to stand for an idea or to have a meaning, we must translate it into the particular ideas of our experience. Abstract from any of the concrete objects of our sense-perception all the particular qualities of which we become aware only in perception, and which are therefore dependent for their existence upon percipient mind; and what remains is not the general or abstract idea of Matter, but simply nothing at all. The reality of all external things consists in the particular sensations from which they derive their names, and by which they are distinguished from one another; think away these particular ideas, and the idea of the thing vanishes with them. And if it be objected that Matter must still be postulated as the *substratum* or support of the qualities, that the 'thing' is not to be resolved into the 'qualities' which belong to it, Berkeley retorts with the question, What can be the support of ideas or sensations but percipient mind? The thing is nothing but

[1] *Principles*, Introd., sect. 15. [2] *Ibid.*, sect. 16 (2nd ed.).

the sum of its qualities; what is true of each of these qualities is true of their sum. The thing itself, so far as we can intelligently speak of it, depends for its existence upon percipient mind.

The disappearance of Locke's material substance, the reduction of Matter to terms of Mind, the discovery of the *esse* of things in their *percipi*, not only delivers us from that scepticism which was the inevitable consequence of the doctrine of the independent existence of matter; it delivers us also from that materialism which Berkeley finds to be the common tendency of the Lockian and of the Cartesian dualism, and of the spirit and method of the science of his time. In our total ignorance of the nature of substance, we could see no reason, according to Locke, why Matter should not be endowed by God with the power to think, so that finite spirits might, after all, be merely material beings gifted with this strange power. He had, moreover, explained the secondary qualities in terms of the primary, accepting the 'corpuscularian hypothesis' as to the causation of ideas in our minds by material things outside us. In the Cartesian dualism Berkeley saw the same tendency. The absolute separation of the two spheres of thought and extension implied that there could be no interaction of mind and matter, and therefore that all explanation of material phenomena must be in terms of matter and motion. And he found the scientific minds of his age devoted to the investigation, in the spirit of Bacon, of efficient, to the exclusion of final causes; fascinated by the same spell of the 'corpuscularian hypothesis.' The logical implication of all this seemed to him to be nothing less than the explicit and uncompromising materialism of Hobbes. It is not so much Locke or the Cartesians or the scientific thinkers of his own day that he has in view as Hobbes, in whom he sees the full fruition, in anticipation, of the tendencies which they represent. Hobbes has once for all made explicit the materialism and the atheism which are implicit in such views; and it is against this materialism and atheism that Berkeley's entire philosophy, whether in the *Essay on Vision*

and the *Principles* of his youth, or in the *Alciphron* of his middle age, or even in the *Siris* of his later years, is one continued protest. The sceptical tendency was the characteristic evil of the Lockian philosophy; the tendency to materialism and atheism was the characteristic vice of the age itself. If the interests of the spiritual life were to be secured, if spirit was not to be reduced to terms of matter, matter must be reduced to terms of spirit.

With its substantiality, matter loses at the same time its causal power. If matter consists in ideas, it is clearly passive, and the sole agent is seen to be mind or spirit. One idea cannot be the cause of another idea; it can only be its sign or symbol, suggesting it as a word suggests its meaning to those who have learned what it represents. The business of science is simply the interpretation of these natural signs, the study of this language of nature. This new interpretation of natural causation which, by convicting the material world of impotence, at the same time discovers in it the revelation of the divine Spirit speaking to the spirit of man in the language of natural signs, is most fully unfolded in Berkeley's earliest work, the *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*. The immediate object of the treatise was to give a preliminary, and intentionally incomplete, account of the doctrine of Immaterialism, which Berkeley had already formulated in his own mind, and of which he gave a complete exposition in the *Principles*, published in the following year. Its main thesis accordingly is that the object of vision is merely colour or coloured extension and, since this is obviously an idea, that the object of vision is mind-dependent. The view commonly held was that we see much more than this, namely, external objects or distance outward from the eye. But distance, Berkeley contends, cannot strictly be seen; we see only coloured points or the ends of the rays of light which reach the eye, not the rays themselves. Outness or space is a mere abstract idea; reduce it to its concrete particulars, and it becomes

the tactual sensations which are suggested by the visual sensations, because they have been constantly connected with the latter in our experience. We do not see distant objects, we foresee or expect them; and 'they' are not so much future objects of vision as future objects of touch. 'In treating of Vision,' he tells us in the later 'Vindication' of the theory, 'it was my purpose to consider the *effects* and *appearances*, the objects perceived by my senses, the ideas of sight as connected with those of touch; to inquire how one idea comes to suggest another belonging to a different sense, how things visible suggest things tangible, how present things suggest things more remote and future, whether by likeness, by necessary connexion, by geometrical inference, or by arbitrary institution.'[1]

So far as the problem of the mere psychology of vision is concerned, Locke had suggested and, to a certain extent, anticipated Berkeley's solution in a well-known passage. 'The ideas we receive by sensation are often, in grown people, altered by the judgment, without our taking notice of it. When we set before our eyes a round globe of any uniform colour, *e.g.* gold, alabaster, or jet, it is certain that the idea thereby imprinted on our mind is of a flat circle, variously shadowed, with several degrees of light and brightness coming to our eyes. But we having, by use, been accustomed to perceive what kind of appearance convex bodies are wont to make in us; what alterations are made in the reflections of light by the difference of the sensible figures of bodies;—the judgment presently, by an habitual custom, alters the appearances into their causes. So that from that which is truly variety of shadow or colour, collecting the figure, it makes it pass for a mark of figure, and frames to itself the perception of a convex figure and an uniform colour; when the idea we receive from thence is only a plane variously coloured, as is evident in painting.'[2] Berkeley carries the psychological investigation further than Locke

[1] *The Theory of Visual Language Vindicated and Explained*, sect. 14.

[2] *Essay*, II. ix. 8.

had done; but his own interest in his theory of vision is philosophical rather than psychological, and its philosophical interest for us, if not for his first readers, lies not so much in its main thesis of the mind-dependent character of the objects of vision, in the strict sense, as in its formulation, with special reference to vision, of the theory of sense-symbolism. The data of sight are the signs of the data of touch; and the connexion between the sign and the thing signified is as arbitrary as the connexion between a word and its meaning. That this was Berkeley's own chief interest in the problem of vision is evident from the following statement: 'How comes it to pass that we apprehend by the ideas of sight certain other ideas, which neither resemble them, nor cause them, nor are caused by them, nor have any necessary connexion with them?—The solution of this problem, in its full extent, doth comprehend the whole Theory of Vision. This stating of the matter placeth it on a new foot, and in a different light from all preceding theories. . . . To which the proper answer is—*That this is done in virtue of an arbitrary connexion, instituted by the Author of Nature.*'[1] In the *Principles* this interpretation of natural causation is generalised. 'The connexion of ideas does not imply the relation of *cause* and *effect*, but only of a mark or *sign* with the *thing signified*. The fire which I see is not the cause of the pain I suffer upon my approaching it, but the mark that forewarns me of it. In like manner the noise that I hear is not the effect of this or that motion or collision of the ambient bodies, but the sign thereof. . . . Hence, it is evident that those things which, under the notion of a cause co-operating or concurring to the production of effects, are altogether inexplicable and run us into great absurdities, may be very naturally explained, and have a proper and obvious use assigned to them, when they are considered only as marks or signs for *our* information. And it is the searching after and endeavouring to understand this Language (if I may so call it) of the Author of

[1] *The Theory of Visual Language Vindicated and Explained*, sects. 42, 43.

Nature, that ought to be the employment of the natural philosopher; and not the pretending to explain things by *corporeal* causes, which doctrine seems to have too much estranged the minds of men from that Active Principle, that supreme and wise Spirit "in whom we live, move, and have our being."'[1]

The disproof of the validity of the conceptions of substance and cause, when applied to the material world, that is, the world of ideas or sensations, is for Berkeley in itself the proof of the validity of their application to the world of spirit. The proved unsubstantiality and impotence of things is the demonstration of the substantiality and power of persons or spirits. In the first place, as the *esse* of things is *percipi*, the *esse* of mind or spirit is *percipere*; perception implies a percipient mind. The percipient subject must be distinguished from the perceptions of which it is the presupposition. 'Besides all that endless variety of ideas or objects of knowledge, there is likewise Something which knows or perceives them; and exercises divers operations, as willing, imagining, remembering, about them. This perceiving, active being is what I call *mind*, *spirit*, *soul*, or *myself*. By which words I do not denote any one of my ideas, but a thing entirely distinct from them, wherein they exist, or, which is the same thing, whereby they are perceived; for the existence of an idea consists in being perceived.'[2] Of the self we have not an 'idea,' but a 'notion.' 'We may be said to have some knowledge or *notion* of our own minds, of spirits and active beings; whereof in a strict sense we have not *ideas*. In like manner, we know and have a *notion* of relations between things or ideas; which relations are distinct from the ideas or things related, inasmuch as the latter may be perceived by us without our perceiving the former. To me it seems that *ideas*, *spirits*, and *relations* are all in their respective kinds the object of human knowledge and subject of discourse; and that the term *idea* would be improperly

[1] *Principles*, sects. 65, 66.

[2] *Ibid.*, sect. 2.

extended to signify *everything* we know or have any notion of.'[1]

In the *Third Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous* Berkeley has anticipated Hume's criticism that the same objections which Berkeley has urged against the existence of material substance are applicable to his own conception of spiritual substance. 'You acknowledge you have, properly speaking, no *idea* of your own soul. You even affirm that spirits are a sort of beings altogether different from ideas. Consequently that no idea can be like a spirit. We have therefore no idea of any spirit. You admit nevertheless that there is a spiritual Substance, although you have no idea of it; while you deny there can be such a thing as material Substance, because you have no notion or idea of it. Is this fair dealing? To act consistently, you must either admit Matter or reject Spirit. What say you to this?' Berkeley's answer is that the cases differ in two all-important respects. First, the notion of matter, as the unthinking support of ideas, is 'repugnant' or self-contradictory, whereas 'it is no repugnancy to say that a perceiving thing should be the subject of ideas, or an active thing the cause of them.' Secondly, while 'I have no reason for believing the existence of Matter,' 'the being of my Self, that is, my own soul, mind, or thinking principle, I evidently know by reflexion.' Hylas still objects: 'Notwithstanding all you have said, to me it seems that, according to your own way of thinking, and in consequence of your own principles, it should follow that *you* are only a system of floating ideas, without any substance to support them. Words are not to be used without a meaning. And, as there is no more meaning in *spiritual Substance* than in *material Substance*, the one is to be exploded as well as the other.' Berkeley's reply, in the person of Philonous, is as follows: 'How often must I repeat, that I know or am conscious of my own being; and that *I myself* am not my ideas, but somewhat else, a thinking, active

[1] *Principles*, sect. 89.

principle that perceives, knows, wills, and operates about ideas. I know that I, one and the same self, perceive both colours and sounds: that a colour cannot perceive a sound, nor a sound a colour: that I am therefore one individual principle, distinct from colour and sound; and, for the same reason, from all other sensible things and inert ideas. But, I am not in like manner conscious either of the existence or essence of Matter. On the contrary, I know that nothing inconsistent can exist, and that the existence of matter implies an inconsistency. Farther, I know what I mean when I affirm that there is a spiritual substance or support of ideas, that is, that a spirit knows and perceives ideas. But, I do not know what is meant when it is said that an unperceiving substance hath inherent in it and supports either ideas or the archetypes of ideas. There is therefore upon the whole no parity of case between Spirit and Matter.'[1]

In the second place, Berkeley finds in Spirit the only real cause or power. In this case also we have no 'idea,' but a 'notion.' 'Such is the nature of Spirit, or that which acts, that it cannot be of itself perceived, but only by the effects which it produceth. . . . So far as I can see, the words, *will*, *understanding*, *mind*, *soul*, *spirit*, do not stand for different ideas, or, in truth, for any idea at all, but for something which is very different from ideas, and which, being an agent, cannot be like unto, or represented by, any idea whatsoever. Though it must be owned at the same time that we have some *notion* of soul, spirit, and the operations of the mind, such as willing, loving, hating—inasmuch as we know or understand the meaning of these words. I find I can excite ideas in my mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the scene as oft as I think fit. It is no more than *willing*, and straightway this or that idea arises in my fancy; and by the same power it is obliterated and makes way for another. This making and unmaking of ideas doth very properly denominate the mind active. Thus much is

[1] Works, i. 449–451.

certain and grounded on experience: but when we talk of unthinking agents, or of exciting ideas exclusive of volition, we only amuse ourselves with words.'[1] Similarly, the existence of other finite spirits is at least a probable inference, 'if we see signs and effects indicating distinct finite agents like ourselves, and see no sign or symptom whatever that leads to a rational belief of Matter.'[2] The most convincing ground of belief in the existence of our fellow-men is their speaking to us, and we have the same ground for believing in the existence of God, who speaks to us in the universal sense-symbolism of Nature. The test of reality is externality, in the sense that the ideas are produced in our minds by no activity of our own, but by another Spirit, and produced in such a constant and uniform manner that, arbitrary as the connexion between them is, we learn to predict what will actually happen, and find that we are living in a world that is identical with, in the sense of similar to, that of our fellow-men. The significant and interpretable character of the ideas presented to us in sense-experience points to reason, as well as will, in its Author. The permanence and continuity that characterise our changing experience find their explanation in the reasonable constancy of the divine Will which is actively present in it all. The world is a constant creation; the infinite Spirit is ever speaking to the spirits of men.

Such, in brief outline, is Berkeley's bold and brilliant youthful speculation as to the nature of the material world and its relation to man and God. The religious interest which inspired it finds its complete satisfaction in the result. The great obstacle which had prevented man's apprehension of God was independent Matter. That removed, sense is no veil that obscures the vision of God, but rather the transparent medium of the divine self-revelation. 'Spirit with spirit can meet,' God can speak with man face to face. With this satisfying result

[1] *Principles*, sects. 27, 28. [2] Works, i. 450.

Berkeley seems to have been content. Other interests absorbed his middle life—practical philanthropy and theological controversy. These busy years had indeed one notable literary outcome, the series of seven Dialogues entitled *Alciphron or the Minute Philosopher*, of which it is no exaggeration to say that they are 'more fitted than any in English literature to recall the charm of Plato and Cicero.'[1] But their philosophical content is unfortunately unequal to their literary merits. As a piece of controversial discussion, they suffer from the fatal defect of unfairness and misrepresentation of the positions which it is their aim to refute. Even Professor Fraser admits that Berkeley's 'natural impetuosity, added to indignation on account of the exclusive claim of the "minute philosophers" to free employment of reason in religion, tempt him to use language hardly consistent with the philosophical temper. Those whom he charged with atheism were professed theists, engaged with the important question of the nature and resources of what was called "natural religion," and the duty of reason to investigate this without restraint by ecclesiastical or other authority.'[2] Apart from the merits of the controversy between Berkeley and the deists of his time, whom he identifies with atheists, and designates 'minute philosophers' because of their inability to take large views of things, the controversy itself, as it develops, belongs rather to the sphere of theological apologetics than to that of philosophy proper. The philosophical interest culminates in the fourth Dialogue, in which the proof of the divine existence is found in the language of vision. It is significant that Berkeley not only republished the *Theory of Vision* as an appendix to the Dialogues, but in the following year published a *Vindication* of that theory. 'Being persuaded that the *Theory of Vision*, annexed to *The Minute Philosopher*, affords to thinking men a new and unanswerable proof of the Existence and immediate Operation of God, and the constant condescending care of His Providence, I think

[1] Fraser, Berkeley's Works, ii. 6.

[2] *Ibid.*, ii. 375.

myself concerned, as well as I am able, to defend and explain it, at a time wherein Atheism hath made a greater progress than some are willing to own, or others to believe.'[1] The theory offers, he says, 'a new argument of a singular nature in proof of the immediate Care and Providence of a God, present to our minds, and directing our actions.'[2]

The Third Dialogue is devoted to the question of the nature of Virtue, and is directed against Shaftesbury's theory. While the discussion is vitiated by misrepresentation of his opponent's position, it supplies some interesting suggestions as to its author's ethical views. It has been said that there is no real connexion between these and his metaphysical position. 'Bishop Berkeley,' says Mr. Selby-Bigge, 'was a most metaphysical person with very interesting views on the relation of human and divine reason, which at once suggest to us consequences of the most vital importance for morals, but the ethical portions of his writings might, to all appearance, have been written by Paley.'[3] But Berkeley has himself suggested that his war against abstractions might have been carried into the sphere of ethics as well as into that of natural philosophy and of metaphysics. 'What it is for a man to be happy, or an object good, every one may think he knows. But to frame an abstract idea of happiness, prescinded from all particular pleasure, or of goodness from everything that is good, this is what few can pretend to. So likewise a man may be just and virtuous without having precise ideas of justice and virtue. The opinion that those and the like words stand for general notions, abstracted from all particular persons and actions, seems to have rendered morality difficult and the study thereof of less use to mankind. And in effect one may make a great progress in school-ethics without ever being the wiser or better man for it, or knowing how to behave himself in the affairs of life more to the advantage of himself or his neighbours than

[1] Works, ii. 379, 380.
[2] Works, ii. 385.
[3] *British Moralists*, Introd., p. xx.

he did before.'[1] Although he never carried out the hint here conveyed of a reform of the science of ethics on his own lines of thought about external reality, he did, in the discourse on *Passive Obedience*, directed apparently against Locke's views of Sovereignty in his *Treatise of Civil Government*, investigate the relation of this duty to 'the principles of the Law of Nature,' developing the analogy between moral law and the laws of the divine government of Nature in a striking and suggestive way.

The impressive and beautiful words with which Berkeley closes his last philosophical work are singularly applicable to himself. 'Truth is the cry of all, but the game of a few. Certainly, where it is the chief passion, it doth not give way to vulgar cares and views; nor is it contented with a little ardour in the early time of life; active, perhaps, to pursue, but not so fit to weigh and revise. He that would make a real progress in knowledge must dedicate his age as well as youth, the later growth as well as first fruits, at the altar of Truth.'[2] In the comparative quiet and seclusion of his later years at Cloyne he found time and opportunity to 'weigh and revise' the results of his earlier thinking in the light of past thought, the records of which he seems to have studied with unabated ardour. The union in him of the practical with the speculative interest, as well as the intensity of his consciousness of the religious significance of every element and incident of human life, is curiously illustrated in this final work, published in 1744, thirty-five years after the *Essay on Vision*. It is entitled 'Siris: a Chain of Philosophical Reflexions and Inquiries concerning the Virtues of Tar-water and divers other subjects connected together and arising one from another.' Its primary concern is with the body and its ills, but its ultimate concern is with the soul. 'If the lute be not well tuned, the musician fails of his harmony. And, in

[1] *Principles*, sect. 100.

[2] *Siris*, sect. 368.

our present condition, the operations of the mind so far depend on the right tone or good condition of its instrument, that anything which greatly contributes to preserve or recover the health of the Body is well worth the attention of the Mind. These considerations have moved me to communicate to the public, the salutary virtues of Tar-water; to which I thought myself indispensably obliged by the duty every man owes to mankind. And, as effects are linked with their causes, my thoughts on this low but useful theme led to farther inquiries, and those on to others; remote perhaps and speculative, but I hope not altogether useless or unentertaining.' Living, he says, 'in a remote corner among poor neighbours, who for want of a regular physician have often recourse to me, I have had frequent opportunities of trial'; and the result of these trials of its virtues was the conviction that he had found in this simple drug the panacea for all the bodily ills of men. The purpose of the book is at once to describe the nature of this panacea and to develop the metaphysical and religious reflections which are suggested by the marvellous properties of a thing apparently, and in itself, so simple and so 'low.'

Professor Fraser calls *Siris* 'the most curious and profound of Berkeley's works.'[1] It is the most profound in the sense that it raises questions which had not occurred to his mind in the earlier works; but, as the same writer remarks, 'the gold has to be separated from the dross.'[2] As the title suggests, the work is rather a series of 'reflexions and inquiries' than a systematic treatise. It is more like a series of unconnected notes, such as we find in the youthful Commonplace Book, than a sustained philosophical argument, and it is as difficult as in the case of the Cambridge Platonists to extricate the author's own views from the mass of quotation and allusion to older writers with which its pages are crowded. If it were not for the occasional occurrence of a passage which only Berkeley could have written, we should be apt to question the

[1] Works, iii. 117.
[2] *Berkeley*, in 'Philosophical Classics,' p. 198.

authorship, judging from the style alone. The multifarious reading, of which it gives evidence, is ill-digested; the views of 'Platonists, Pythagoreans, Egyptians, and Chaldeans' are strangely identified,[1] nor is there any attempt to distinguish the views of Plato himself from those of the Neo-Platonists. There is the old effort to discredit Atheism, by showing that 'modern Atheism, be it of Hobbes, Spinoza, Collins, or whom you will, is not to be countenanced by the learning and great names of antiquity.'[2] On the other hand, Pantheism and Mysticism are distinguished from Atheism, on the ground that 'whoever acknowledgeth the universe to be made and governed by an Eternal Mind cannot be justly deemed an Atheist.'[3] There is the old hostility to 'the corpuscularian and mechanical philosophy, which hath prevailed for about a century.' 'This, indeed, might usefully enough have employed some share of the leisure and curiosity of inquisitive persons. But when it entered the seminaries of learning, as a necessary accomplishment and most important part of education, by engrossing men's thoughts, and fixing their minds so much on corporeal objects, and the laws of motion, it hath, however undesignedly, indirectly, and by accident, yet not a little, indisposed them for spiritual, moral, and intellectual matters.'[4]

The general drift of Berkeley's later thought, as revealed in this book, is clearly in the direction of a more transcendental and Platonic form of Idealism than that which is unfolded in the *Principles*. He has come under the spell of Plato, who 'had joined with an imagination the most splendid and magnificent, an intellect not less deep and clear,'[5] 'whose writings are the touchstone of a hasty and shallow mind; whose philosophy has been the admiration of ages; which supplied patriots, magistrates, and lawgivers to the most flourishing States, as well as fathers to the Church, and doctors to the schools.'[6] We find accordingly a new disparagement of

[1] *Siris*, sect. 362. [2] *Ibid.*, sect. 354. [3] *Ibid.*, sect. 352.
[4] *Ibid.*, sect. 331. [5] *Ibid.*, sect. 360. [6] *Ibid.*, sect. 332.

the senses and a new exaltation of purely intellectual insight. Sense is only the first and lowest step in the ascent of the soul from the world to God, the meanest link in the Golden Chain that unites the finite to the infinite Spirit. 'The perceptions of sense are gross; but even in the senses there is a difference. Though harmony and proportion are not objects of sense, yet the eye and the ear are organs which offer to the mind such materials by means whereof she may apprehend both the one and the other. By experiments of sense we become acquainted with the lower faculties of the soul; and from them, whether by a gradual evolution or ascent, we arrive at the highest. Sense supplies images to memory. These become subjects for fancy to work upon. Reason considers and judges of the imaginations. And these acts of reason become new objects to the understanding. In this scale, each lower faculty is a step that leads to one above it. And the uppermost naturally leads to the Deity; which is rather the object of intellectual knowledge than even of the discursive faculty, not to mention the sensitive. There runs a Chain throughout the whole system of beings. In this Chain one link drags another. The meanest things are connected with the highest.'[1] The extreme links of this Chain are the 'grossly sensible' and the 'purely intelligible.' The earlier distinction between the idea and the notion is now developed into the contrast between 'phenomena' or 'appearances' on the one hand and Ideas (in the Platonic sense) or Reality on the other. The senses, instead of being regarded as the medium of the self-revelation of the divine Spirit to the human, are condemned as veiling the divine Reality from our spirits. The mind is 'depressed by the heaviness of the animal nature to which it is chained'; we are 'oppressed and overwhelmed by the senses,' the world of which is a 'region of darkness and dreams.' 'Sense at first besets and overbears the mind. The sensible appearances are all in all: our reasonings

[1] *Siris*, sect. 303.

are employed about them: our desires terminate in them: we look no farther for realities or causes; till Intellect begins to dawn, and cast a ray on this shadowy scene. We then perceive the true principle of unity, identity, and existence. Those things that before seemed to constitute the whole of Being, upon taking an intellectual view of things, prove to be but fleeting phantoms.'[1]

While Berkeley's earlier view of reality, so far at least as the external world is concerned, was expressed in the statement that 'the *esse* of things is *percipi*,' the view which we find in *Siris* might rather be expressed in the statement that 'the *esse* of things is *concipi*.' Reality, being rationally constituted, can be apprehended only by intellect or reason. 'We know a thing when we understand it; and we understand it when we can interpret or tell what it signifies. Strictly, the sense knows nothing. We perceive indeed sounds by hearing, and characters by sight. But we are not therefore said to understand them.'[2] 'As understanding perceiveth not, that is, doth not hear, or see, or feel, so sense knoweth not: and although the mind may use both sense and fancy, as means whereby to arrive at knowledge, yet sense or soul, so far forth as sensitive, knoweth nothing.'[3] In such sentences as these we see how Berkeley's centre of speculative interest has changed from the world of the senses to that of intellect or reason, and yet how closely his later Idealism is related to his earlier doctrine of Immaterialism; how the one is rather a development than a negation of the other. Even in the *Principles* he had insisted upon the interpretability of the data of sensation, upon their symbolic or significant character, as the feature which makes science, on the one hand, and the practical conduct of life, on the other, possible for man. Even in the *Principles* he had insisted upon the necessity of supplementing the 'idea' by the 'notion,' the perceptual by the conceptual apprehension of reality, holding that only through such notions can we apprehend relations or

[1] *Siris*, sect. 294. [2] *Ibid.*, sect. 253. [3] *Ibid.*, sect. 305.

penetrate to spiritual substance and true causes. But his early doctrine of Immaterialism, or of the sensational character of external reality, has lost interest for him, in view of the higher truth, which now preoccupies him, of the rational constitution of the universe. In a new and deeper sense he now holds that God speaks to man, not merely in the simple language of Vision and of Sense, but in the deeper and more intimate communion of the divine with the human Reason.

CHAPTER II

HUME: EMPIRICISM AND SCEPTICISM

HUME is not only the greatest English philosopher; he is also one of the great figures in English literature. In his 'Own Life' he tells us that he 'was seized very early with a passion for literature, which has been the ruling passion of my life, and the great source of my enjoyments.' It was not merely in the sphere of philosophy proper, but in that of the essay and of history, that he sought to gratify this passion, and as a writer he is equally successful in all these spheres. His contribution to philosophy was the work of his youth, though he revised, and to some extent modified it in later years; the real occupation of these later years was found in the production of essays on political and economic subjects and of his *History of England*. The revised statement of his philosophical opinions was confessedly undertaken rather with a view to their more effective literary expression than with any purpose of serious modification. 'I had always entertained a notion, that my want of success in publishing the Treatise of Human Nature, had proceeded more from the manner than the matter, and that I had been guilty of a very usual indiscretion, in going to the press too early. I, therefore, cast the first part of that work anew in the Enquiry concerning Human Understanding.' He professes, in his Essays, to attempt 'a union between the learned and conversible worlds,' and it seems clear that in philosophy he sought to effect the same union. The general verdict of posterity, if not that of his own contemporaries, has been that he succeeded in this ambition. The one notable exception is the formidable

dictum of Dr. Johnson, that 'his style is not English; the structure of his sentences is French.' It can hardly be doubted that his residence in France during the three years of youth while he was writing the *Treatise*, and his resulting familiarity with the French language and literature, had some influence upon his English style, and that this influence was one of the chief factors in his education as a writer.

Perhaps the most competent German historian of philosophy has characterised Hume as 'without doubt the clearest and most unprejudiced as well as the most comprehensive and philosophically the best equipped thinker whom the English nation has produced.'[1] It is in virtue of the relentless faithfulness with which he follows out the logical consequences of the empirical point of view that we are compelled to admit that in the *Treatise of Human Nature* the logic of empiricism works itself out to its inevitable conclusions. It would be unjust to both Locke and Berkeley to say that they stopped short of these conclusions from theological or other prejudices. The truth is that empiricism was only a part of their philosophy, the other part being, as we have seen, of a rationalistic or idealistic type; so that we cannot describe the sceptical philosophy of Hume as the complete logical development of the Lockian and Berkeleyan philosophy, but only as the logical completion of the empirical element in the philosophy of his predecessors. That which had for them been a part becomes for Hume the whole: he is an empiricist pure and simple, and he shows us with singular insight the ultimate meaning and consequences of pure empiricism. Locke's empiricism had been limited to the solution of the problem of the origin of the materials or elements of knowledge; it had never occurred to him to give a purely empirical account of knowledge itself, except in so far as he thought that the question of the 'original' of knowledge had more than a merely psychological and genetic

[1] Windelband, *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, i. 326.

significance. Hume disallows the distinction between knowledge and its materials, and seeks to give an empirical derivation and explanation of knowledge itself, alike on its material and on its formal side. Berkeley had traced the content of our knowledge of the material world to its origin in ideas or sensations, and had denied the reality of material substance and of material cause; but it had not occurred to him to give an empirical account of the principles of substance and cause. Without a 'notional' apprehension of these latter principles, knowledge seemed to him impossible, and it was in vindication of the validity of their true application that he sought to disprove their applicability to the relations of the data of our sensational experience to one another. Similarly we have seen that neither Locke nor Berkeley was a mere nominalist: nominalism was only a part of their theory of knowledge and of reality. For Hume, Berkeley's doctrine of the invalidity of 'abstract ideas' is 'one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries that has been made of late years in the republic of letters.'[1] It is for him the whole truth, and again he shows what are its full consequences. Once more, the experimental or psychological method had been the method only of the Second Book of Locke's *Essay*; it was not the method of Book IV., to which all that precedes is really introductory and subsidiary, and in which alone the solution of his real problem of the nature and limits of human knowledge is attempted. Similarly for Berkeley the experimental or psychological method seems appropriate to the solution of the problem of the nature of that experience which we describe in abstract terms as knowledge of the material world; but he regards that method as inadequate to the solution of the deeper problem of the nature of that spiritual reality, divine and human, to which he has found himself experimentally forced to reduce material reality. For Hume the experimental or psychological method is equally applicable to all questions of reality or

[1] *Treatise*, bk. i. pt. i. sect. 7.

'matters of fact,' the psychological explanation is the only possible explanation: the sub-title of the *Treatise* is 'an attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects.'

The limited scope assigned to the principle of empiricism or sensationalism by Locke and Berkeley, as contrasted with the unlimited scope assigned to that principle by Hume, may be summarised in the statement that while his predecessors had no thought of reducing reason to terms of sensation and experience, but always, implicitly and explicitly, assumed the distinction between these to be ultimate, Hume is a thorough-going empiricist, in the sense that he seeks to give an empirical account or explanation of all our so-called 'rational' judgments, to show that these judgments are simply impressions and ideas associated by custom, expectations developed in us by experience. The result is that while his predecessors assume the distinction between the certainties of knowledge and the probabilities of experience, and devote themselves to the investigation of the nature and extent of human knowledge, Hume sees in our so-called 'knowledge' only a fiction to be accounted for in terms of that experience which is for him the only source of human 'understanding,' the only basis of that probability which supersedes our imagined knowledge and certainty. Locke and Berkeley had successively narrowed the range of knowledge. Locke had found that there is 'no science of bodies'; that, in the strict sense, we have no 'knowledge' of external reality; that our knowledge is either real and particular or general and without real significance. But that we do know or apprehend truth with certainty, that intuition and demonstration are valid forms of such certain knowledge, he had never questioned; these are essential features in his theory of knowledge. Berkeley had insisted, more strenuously than Locke, upon reducing our abstract and general knowledge to concrete and particular terms, or, in his own terminology, to 'ideas'; he had further reduced causality, so far as the external world is concerned, to sense-symbolism, and insisted upon the

arbitrary or the merely customary character of all natural relations, substituting 'suggestion' for reason as the organising principle of our sense-experience. Yet it had not occurred to him to doubt the rationality of the principles of substance and cause. In the very arbitrariness of the relations of the data of sensation he had seen the evidence of the rationality of their source; in the uniformity of these relations he had seen the expression of a supreme cosmic Reason. Hume's denial of the distinction between the rational and the empirical elements in knowledge leads inevitably to the disintegration of knowledge; certainty is reduced to probability; a thorough-going empiricism is found to be the negation of knowledge, or to result in universal scepticism.

The problem of knowledge changes, in Hume's hands, from that of Substance to that of Cause. Although the problem of substance had bulked more largely in the discussions of his predecessors, he saw that the point of real strategic interest was the validity of the causal principle. This had been the central constructive principle in the philosophy of both Locke and Berkeley. Locke had invoked material substance as the cause of our sensations, and had appealed to the same causal principle in his proof of the divine existence. Berkeley had similarly sought to demonstrate the existence of God as the cause of the ideas of sensation, arguing that such a cause could be found only in mind, and since it is not found in the human mind, it follows that Supreme Spirit is the universal Cause. Of causal agency, whether in ourselves, in other finite agents, or in God, we have a 'notion' or rational apprehension, if not an 'idea' or empirical conception. What, Hume asks, is the origin, and therefore, the warrant of this causal principle, by the employment of which alone we are enabled to transcend the particulars of our percipient experience, and to relate them in an apparent cosmos or rational system? Is it in reality a rational, or is it a merely empirical and customary relation? On the answer to this question, he sees, depends the consistency of empiricism as a complete and self-contained theory of knowledge.

There are not many references to other writers in Hume's works; but from the few such references which do occur, as well as from the entire train of thought, it is clear that he finds his point of departure in the writings of his English predecessors. Although the *Treatise* was written during his residence in France, there are, in the metaphysical part of that work, few traces of the influence of French philosophy, even that of Descartes. The plan of the first Book is modelled on that of Locke's *Essay*, the four parts being entitled 'Of Ideas,' 'Of the Ideas of Space and Time,' 'Of Knowledge and Probability,' 'Of the Sceptical and other Systems of Philosophy.' Hume's object clearly is to complete, by correcting and systematising, the philosophy of Locke and Berkeley. Speaking of Locke's discussion of innate ideas, he says: 'A like ambiguity and circumlocution seem to run through that philosopher's reasonings on this as well as most other subjects.'[1] In the same work he says of Berkeley: 'Most of the writings of that very ingenious author form the best lessons of scepticism, which are to be found either among the ancient or modern philosophers, Bayle not excepted. He professes, however, in his title-page (and undoubtedly with great truth) to have composed his book against the sceptics as well as against the atheists and free-thinkers. But that all his arguments, though otherwise intended, are, in reality, merely sceptical, appears from this, *that they admit of no answer and produce no conviction*. Their only effect is to cause that momentary amazement and irresolution and confusion, which is the result of scepticism.'[2] That Hume was fully conscious of the novel and revolutionary character of his own views, as substituting scepticism, the result of a thorough-going empiricism, for the mixture of empiricism and rationalism which he found in Locke and Berkeley, is evident from a letter, written a fortnight after the publication of the *Treatise*, when he was waiting impatiently to learn its fate, in which he says: 'Those who are accustomed to reflect on such

[1] *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, sect. ii., note.
[2] *Ibid.*, sect. xii. pt. i., note.

abstract subjects, are commonly full of prejudices; and those who are unprejudiced are unacquainted with metaphysical reasonings. My principles are so remote from all the vulgar sentiments on the subject, that were they to take place, they would produce almost a total alteration in philosophy; and you know, revolutions of this kind are not easily brought about.'[1]

The determination of Hume's precise position in philosophy is rendered much more difficult by the fact that he has presented his views in two, considerably divergent, forms: first in the *Treatise*, and later in the two *Enquiries*. In an 'advertisement' prefixed to the posthumous edition of the collected Essays, he repudiates the *Treatise* as a 'juvenile work, which the Author never acknowledged,' and desires that henceforth 'the following Pieces may alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles.' In this work, he says, 'some negligences in his former reasoning and more in the expression, are, he hopes, corrected.' In a letter to Gilbert Elliot he says: 'I believe the Philosophical Essays contain everything of consequence relating to the understanding, which you would meet with in the Treatise; and I give you my advice against reading the latter. By shortening and simplifying the questions, I really render them much more complete. *Addo dum minuo.* The philosophical principles are the same in both; but I was carried away by the heat of youth and invention to publish too precipitately. So vast an undertaking, planned before I was one-and-twenty, and composed before twenty-five, must necessarily be very defective. I have repented my haste a hundred, and a hundred times.'[2] In another letter he confesses 'a very great mistake in conduct, viz. my publishing at all the "Treatise of Human Nature," a book which pretended to innovate in all the sublimest paths of philosophy, and which I composed before I was five-and-twenty; above all, the positive air which prevails

[1] Burton's *Life of Hume*, i. 105. [2] *Ibid.*, i. 337.

in that book, and which may be imputed to the ardour of youth, so much displeases me, that I have not patience to review it. But what success the same doctrines, better illustrated and expressed, may meet with, *adhuc sub judice lis est.*'[1]

While no one will hesitate to accept Hume's estimate of the literary superiority of the *Enquiries*, it is impossible to follow his advice, and to substitute the *Enquiries* for the *Treatise*. The 'corrections' which the author himself acknowledges he has made affect the doctrine too vitally, at several points, to warrant us in accepting the later as the equivalent of the earlier work. Mr. Selby-Bigge speaks of 'the lower philosophic standard' of the first *Enquiry*, and attributes this to the avoidance of difficulties which would disturb unnecessarily the confidence of ordinary opinion, and especially to the avoidance of 'the general question of the relation of knowledge and reality.' In the second *Enquiry*, in particular, he detects 'a very remarkable change of tone or temper, which, even more than particular statements, leads him to suppose that the system of Morals in the Enquiry is really and essentially different from that in the Treatise.'[2] But I cannot help agreeing with Grimm[3] that, even in the first *Enquiry*, the modifications of view are of essential importance, and with Professor Campbell Fraser that while in the *Treatise* we have Hume's statement of scepticism as the inevitable consequence of the empirical principles which he has adopted, in the *Enquiry* we have his 'sceptical *solution* of sceptical doubts.'[4] While the *Treatise* is undoubtedly the more important work, and 'to ignore it' would be, as Mr. Selby-Bigge says, 'to deprive Hume of his place among the great thinkers of Europe,' to ignore the *Enquiry* would be to neglect the modifications which later reflection, and not mere considerations of literary effect or of popularity, induced Hume to make upon the earlier statement of his

[1] Burton's *Life*, i. 98.
[2] Introd. to edition of *Enquiries*, p. xxiii.
[3] *Zur Geschichte des Erkenntnissproblems*, pp. 571–596.
[4] Introd. to Locke's *Essay*, p. cxxxviii.

philosophy. If the later statement is characterised by less 'positiveness' or confidence of tone, it is at the same time the result of a new effort to deduce, from the negations from which escape is still regarded as impossible, conclusions less bewildering to the human mind.

Hume narrows the meaning of the term 'idea' still further than Berkeley had done, and claims to 'restore the word to its original sense, from which Mr. Locke had perverted it, in making it stand for all our perceptions,' by distinguishing 'ideas' from 'impressions,' and including under the latter term 'all our sensations, passions, and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul,' under ideas 'the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning.' 'The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness.' 'By the term of impression,' he says, 'I would not be understood to express the manner, in which our lively perceptions are produced in the soul, but merely the perceptions themselves.' These impressions and ideas are either simple or complex; and while the complex ideas are not in all cases the exact copies of our complex impressions, 'after the most accurate examination, of which I am capable, I venture to affirm,' says Hume, 'that the rule here holds without any exception, and that every simple idea has a simple impression, which resembles it, and every simple impression a correspondent idea. . . . But if any one should deny this universal resemblance, I know no way of convincing him, but by desiring him to show a simple impression, that has not a correspondent idea, or a simple idea, that has not a correspondent impression. If he does not answer this challenge, as 'tis certain he cannot, we may from his silence and our own observation establish our conclusion.' The thesis of empiricism or sensationalism accordingly assumes the form, 'That all our simple ideas in their first appearance are derived from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent.'

The philosophical significance of this thesis is developed in the sequel of the argument, both in the *Treatise* and in the *Enquiry*, and is thus summarised in the latter work: 'Here, therefore, is a proposition, which not only seems, in itself, simple and intelligible; but, if a proper use were made of it, might render every dispute equally intelligible, and banish all that jargon, which has so long taken possession of metaphysical reasonings, and drawn disgrace upon them. . . . When we entertain, therefore, any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but enquire, *from what impression is that supposed idea derived?* And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion. By bringing ideas into so clear a light we may reasonably hope to remove all dispute, which may arise, concerning their nature and reality.'[1]

In the *Treatise* Hume further distinguishes impressions of sensation from those of reflexion, and points out an important difference in their origins, which leads to a modification of the general thesis as to the relation of ideas to impressions. 'The first kind,' he says, 'arises in the soul originally, from unknown causes. The second is derived in a great measure from our ideas, and that in the following order. An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflexion, because derived from it. . . . So that the impressions of reflexion are only antecedent to their correspondent ideas; but posterior to those of sensation, and derived from them.'[2] These 'impressions of reflexion' he otherwise describes as 'passions, desires, and emotions.'

[1] *Enquiry*, sect. ii.

[2] *Treatise*, bk. i. pt. i. sect. 2.

He also distinguishes ideas of memory from those of imagination. In the case of memory, the idea 'retains a considerable degree of its first vivacity [as an impression], and is somewhat intermediate between an impression and an idea'; in the case of imagination, 'it entirely loses that vivacity, and is a perfect idea.' Moreover, 'the imagination is not restrained to the same order and form with the original impressions; while the memory is in a manner tied down in that respect, without any power of variation,' its peculiar function being 'not to preserve the simple ideas, but their order and position.'[1] The freedom of the imagination in the separation and combination of ideas is, however, limited, and a certain uniformity secured, by a 'uniting principle' or 'bond of union' among ideas—'a gentle force, which commonly prevails,' and is the substitute in the imagination for 'that inseparable connexion, by which they are united in our memory.' 'Here is a kind of ATTRACTION, which in the mental world will be found to have as extraordinary effects as in the natural, and to show itself in as many and as various forms.' The 'principles of association' he finds to be Resemblance, Contiguity in time or place, and Causation; and these principles of association become for him the chief factors in the explanation of our so-called 'knowledge' of reality.

Ideas may be related to one another either 'naturally,' according to the principles of association just named, or 'philosophically,' that is, scientifically, according to the different ways in which we see fit to compare them. These philosophical relations are seven in number, namely, resemblance, identity, space and time, quantity or number, degrees in quality, contrariety (existence and non-existence), and causation. Of four of these relations, namely, resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportions in quantity or number, we have certain knowledge; the other three, namely, identity, situations in time and place, and causation, are cases of mere

[1] *Treatise*, bk. i. pt. i. sect. 3.

probability. In the former, the relation 'depends solely upon ideas,' and accordingly is 'the foundation of science'; in the latter it 'depends not upon the idea, and may be absent or present even while *that* remains the same.' In the *Enquiry* this distinction is stated as one between 'relations of ideas' and 'matters of fact.'[1]

Hume's problem is, like Locke's, to determine the nature and validity of our reasonings about matters of fact, or, in his own language, the relation between ideas and impressions. What, he asks, is the validity of any 'conclusion beyond the impressions of our senses?' 'What is the nature of that evidence which assures us of any real existence and matter of fact, beyond the present testimony of our senses, or the records of our memory?'[2] Strictly, it is only in the case of causation that we can be said to 'reason' about matters of fact, since only in that case does the mind 'go beyond what is immediately present to the senses, either to discover the real existence or the relations of objects.' Our predication of the invariableness of the relation of identity or of the situation of the object in space or time will be found to be really based on the relation of cause and effect. What, then, is the nature of the causal inference?

That it is not an 'inference' in the strict sense of a conclusion for which we can give rational grounds, is brought out more clearly in the *Enquiry*[3] than in the *Treatise*. In the first place, he argues that 'the knowledge of this relation is not, in any instance, attained by reasonings *a priori*, but arises entirely from experience,' since 'no object ever discovers, by the qualities which appear to the senses, either the causes which produced it, or the effects which will arise from it.' 'The mind can never possibly find the effect in the supposed cause, by the most accurate scrutiny and examination. For the effect is totally different from the cause, and consequently can never be discovered in it.' As Berkeley had argued, the

[1] Sect. iv. pt. i. [2] *Enquiry*, sect. iv. pt. i. [3] *Ibid.*, sect. iv.

connexion between causes and effects is arbitrary, not rationally necessary. In the second place, even experience cannot be the basis of an inference to the future. 'For all inferences from experience suppose, as their foundation, that the future will resemble the past, and that similar powers will be conjoined with similar sensible qualities.'

The empirical derivation of the idea of causal connexion, the reduction of it to its origin in impression, is traced much more carefully in the *Treatise*. Looking for the impressional basis in the relation of the objects concerned, Hume finds that objects causally related are always (1) contiguous, (2) successive to one another. These relations alone, however, are not sufficient; an object may be contiguous and successive to another without being the effect of the latter. He finds (3) a necessary connexion between the objects. To what impression can this idea be traced? The essence of the causal relation being the connexion of a present impression, or of a past impression retained in memory, with an idea of the imagination, the problem is to account for the transition or 'inference' from the impression to the idea, and for the nature and qualities of the idea which entitle it to the name of 'belief.' The transition or inference is not to be accounted for by any peculiar quality in the object perceived, by any new or unique sense-impression. What is essential is the regularity of the contiguity and succession of the impressions, their 'constant conjunction.' We find, as a matter of experience, that 'like objects have always been placed in like relations of contiguity and succession,' and this constant conjunction in the past leads us to expect the same constant conjunction in the future. The perception of the flame suggests the idea of its constant concomitant, heat. The union of the present impression with the idea of the other impression which has constantly accompanied it in our past experience is a case of association. 'Reason can never show us the connexion of one object with another, tho' aided by experience, and the observation of their constant conjunction in all past instances.

When the mind, therefore, passes from the idea or impression of one object to the idea or belief of another, it is not determined by reason, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects, and unite them in the imagination. Had ideas no more union in the fancy than objects seem to have to the understanding, we could never draw any inference from causes to effects, nor repose belief in any matter of fact. The inference, therefore, depends solely on the union of ideas. . . . Thus tho' causation be a *philosophical* relation, as implying contiguity, succession, and constant conjunction, yet 'tis only so far as it is a *natural* relation, and produces an union among our ideas, that we are able to reason upon it, or draw any inference from it.'[1]

While the repetition of the same impressions in the same relation to one another does not, in a sense, add anything to our experience, and would not afford the basis of a rational inference which is not already afforded by the first instance of the related impressions, yet Hume finds that the repetition does 'produce a new impression, and by that means the idea, which I at present examine. For after a frequent repetition, I find, that upon the appearance of one of the objects, the mind is *determined* by custom to consider its usual attendant, and to consider it in a stronger light upon account of its relation to the first object. 'Tis this impression, then, or *determination*, which affords me the idea of necessity.' The seat of necessity is in the mind, not in the object. 'Either we have no idea of necessity, or necessity is nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects, and from effects to causes, according to their experienced union.' The distribution of the objective and subjective factors in the process is admirably summarised in the statement 'that objects bear to each other the relations of contiguity and succession; that like objects may be observ'd in several instances to have like relations; and that all this is independent of, and ante-

[1] *Treatise*, bk. i. pt. iii. sect. 6.

cedent to the operations of the understanding. But if we go any farther, and ascribe a power or necessary connexion to these objects; this is what we can never observe in them, but must draw the idea of it from what we feel internally in contemplating them.'[1]

The resulting belief differs from other ideas simply in the manner in which it is conceived; it is only 'an additional force and vivacity' that 'distinguishes the ideas of the judgment from the fictions of the imagination.' A belief may therefore be defined as 'a lively idea related to or associated with a present impression'; and it derives its additional force and vivacity from the impression with which it is associated. Resemblance or contiguity may lend an added strength to the association; education or passion may have the same influence as constant conjunction. But, in any case, belief is a matter of feeling, not of rational insight. 'Thus all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation. 'Tis not solely in poetry and music, we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy. When I am convinced of any principle, 'tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give the preference to one set of arguments above another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence. Objects have no discoverable connexion together; nor is it from any other principle but custom operating upon the imagination, that we can draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of another.'[2] 'To consider the matter aright, reason is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls, which carries us along a certain train of ideas, and endows them with particular qualities, according to their particular situations and relations.'[3]

Hume concludes his account of causation by offering a few general 'rules by which to judge of causes and effects.' In these rules he anticipates, in a rather remarkable way, the later methods of inductive reason-

[1] *Treatise*, bk. i. pt. iii. sect. 14.
[2] *Ibid.*, bk. i. pt. iii. sect. 8.
[3] *Ibid.* bk. i. pt. iii. sect. 16.

ing, as formulated by Mill and others, but he states them in the most summary fashion, concluding: 'Here is all the LOGIC I think proper to employ in my reasoning; and perhaps even this was not very necessary, but might have been supply'd by the natural principles of our understanding. Our scholastic headpieces and logicians show no such superiority above the mere vulgar in their reason and ability, as to give us any inclination to imitate them in delivering a long system of rules and precepts to direct our judgment, in philosophy. All the rules of this nature are very easy in their invention, but extremely difficult in their application; and even experimental philosophy, which seems the most natural and simple of any, requires the utmost stretch of human judgment.'[1]

The problem of Substance is for Hume, as we have seen, a minor one, as compared with the central problem of Causation; and is dealt with only in the *Treatise*.[2] But the discussion is no less subtle than the more elaborate treatment of Causation. First, as regards material substance, or the 'existence of body,' the question is not, he says, 'Whether there be body or not?' but 'What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?' This question breaks up into two: 'Why we attribute a *continued* existence to objects, even when they are not present to the senses; and why we suppose them to have an existence *distinct* from the mind and perception.' These two questions are so intimately connected that 'the decision of the one question decides the other': if the objects of perception have a continued existence, they have also an independent existence, and conversely. Hume agrees with Berkeley that neither in perception nor in reason do we find any grounds for belief in the continuous or independent existence of material things: for us their *esse* is *percipi*. That belief, therefore, he concludes, must be the product of the imagination. The imagination

[1] *Treatise*, bk. i. pt. iii. sect. 15. [2] Bk. i. pt. iv. sect. 2.

is stimulated to this activity by two characteristics which belong to the objects of perception, their constancy and their coherence (or the regularity of their changes). Observing these characteristics, we imagine that to exist continuously which appears to our senses to be subject to interruption and to change. 'The imagination, when set into any train of thinking, is apt to continue, even when its object fails it, and like a galley put in motion by the oars, carries on its course without any new impulse,' and this tendency of the imagination 'makes us easily entertain this opinion of the continued existence of body.' What we have been accustomed to find constantly repeated in the same way we soon come to regard, not as similar in spite of its difference, but as numerically the same. The identity of the object is an illusion of the imagination, which is misled by the similarity of an interrupted succession of related objects to uninterrupted succession. 'A succession of related objects . . . is considered with the same smooth and uninterrupted progress of the imagination, as attends the view of the same invariable object. . . . The thought slides along the succession with equal facility as if it considered only one object; and therefore confounds the succession with the identity.' To overcome the contradiction between the supposed identity and the actual interruption or succession, 'we disguise, as much as possible, the interruption, or rather remove it entirely, by supposing that these interrupted perceptions are connected by a real existence, of which we are insensible.' Hence the philosophical hypothesis of 'the double existence of perception and objects; which pleases our reason, in allowing, that our dependent perceptions are interrupted and different; and at the same time is agreeable to the imagination, in attributing a continued existence to something else, which we call objects.' This is, however, but 'a new fiction,' 'only a palliative remedy,' which 'contains all the difficulties of the vulgar system, with some others, that are peculiar to itself.' While the illusion of the popular imagination is inevitable, that of the philosophical imagination is superfluous and,

instead of substituting a sounder view, is a relapse into the old contradiction, which Berkeley has exposed, of distinguishing the object as existent from the object of perception.

The philosophical dogma of spiritual substance is, Hume finds, equally indefensible with that of material substance. His challenge to those who 'imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF' is, as usual, that they point out the impression from which this idea is derived. 'But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have reference. If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, thro' the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable.' All that we find in our conscious experience is a succession of particular, ever-changing perceptions,—impressions and ideas. 'For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.' Men may call themselves persons, but in reality 'they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement. . . . The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor *identity* in different; whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity. The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is composed.' The explanation of the illusion of personal identity is the same

as in the case of that of material substance. In the one case as in the other, a variable and interrupted existence is mistaken by the imagination for an invariable and uninterrupted existence; related objects are mistaken, because related, for identical objects. 'Identity is nothing really belonging to these different perceptions, and uniting them together; but is merely a quality, which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination, when we reflect upon them. . . . Our notions of personal identity proceed entirely from the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas.'[1]

The difficulty immediately suggested by this account of the genesis of the idea of personal identity is, How can a series of perceptions thus remember the preceding and relate them causally to the present perceptions? The inadequacy of the constructive part of his theory, whether on this or some other ground, seems to have forced itself upon Hume himself, for in the Appendix, which he added in the following year to the third volume of the *Treatise*, he says: 'Upon a more strict review of the section concerning *personal identity*, I find myself involved in such a labyrinth, that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent.' So far as the negative part of his argument is concerned, he is still satisfied with it. 'But having thus loosened all our particular perceptions, when I proceed to explain the principle of connexion, which binds them together, and makes us attribute to them a real simplicity and identity; I am sensible, that my account is very defective, and that nothing but the seeming evidence of the precedent reasonings could have induced me to receive it. . . . All my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory, which gives me satisfaction on this head. . . . For my part, I must plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess, that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding. I

[1] *Treatise*, bk. i. pt. iv. sect. 6.

pretend not, however, to pronounce it absolutely insuperable. Others, perhaps, or myself, upon more mature reflections, may discover some hypothesis, that will reconcile those contradictions.' That Hume did not discover any such hypothesis, and that his sense of the difficulty had meanwhile rather increased than diminished, appears from the absence of the entire discussion from the *Enquiry*, published eight years later.

That, in this theory of the self, we have the logical issue of the nominalistic and empirical tendency so prominent in the philosophy of Hume's English predecessors, Locke and Berkeley, is evident from a significant statement in the Appendix from which I have just quoted: 'We can conceive a thinking being to have either many or few perceptions. Suppose the mind to be reduced even below the life of an oyster. Suppose it to have only one perception, as of thirst or hunger. Consider it in that situation. Do you conceive anything but merely that perception? Have you any notion of *self* or *substance?* If not, the addition of other perceptions can never give you that notion.' It does not occur to him that a single or wholly unrelated perception would be as good as none, or that the conception of self is necessitated by the very plurality of 'perceptions,' not the mere 'addition of other perceptions' but their combination or relation—the fact that the plurality of perceptions is experienced as a unity, or in one consciousness, which is what we mean by self.

Thus, so far as reality or matters of fact are concerned, Locke's distinction between knowledge and belief, between certainty and probability, is invalidated by Hume. What we had supposed to be knowledge is seen to be only belief; what had seemed to be certainty is seen to be only probability. 'All knowledge resolves itself into probability, and becomes at last of the same nature with that evidence, which we employ in common life.'[1] What we had supposed to be reasoning turns out to be

[1] *Treatise*, bk. i. pt. iv. sect 1.

simply the custom-induced determination of the imagination, 'more properly an act of the sensitive than of the cogitative part of our natures.' We can never hope to escape from what Bacon called the 'idols of the tribe'; our so-called knowledge is tainted with a fatal subjectivity. We can never escape from the shadow of our own nature; the only possible science is that of human nature, not that of the nature of things. We can never hope to interpret or explain things *ex analogia universi;* we must always do so *ex analogia hominis.*

The very ground of this scepticism, however, suggests at once its limit and its cure. Our scepticism cannot be permanently of the universal or 'Pyrrhonic' type; it is always 'mitigated' by that belief which is more natural than any doubts to which reflection may give rise. 'Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity, has determined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel; nor can we any more forbear viewing certain objects in a stronger and fuller light, upon account of their customary connexion with a present impression, than we can hinder ourselves from thinking as long as we are awake, or seeing the surrounding bodies, when we turn our eyes towards them in broad sunshine. Whoever has taken the pains to refute the cavils of this *total* scepticism, has really disputed without an antagonist, and endeavoured by arguments to establish a faculty, which nature has antecedently implanted in the mind, and rendered unavoidable.'[1] The sceptical argument is too abstract and remote from ordinary human interests to hold the mind for long. 'Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterates all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I would

[1] *Loc. cit.*

return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther.'[1] In surrendering himself to this natural tendency to belief, the philosophical sceptic consistently maintains his scepticism. 'I may, nay I must yield to the current of nature, in submitting to my senses and understanding; and in this blind submission I show most perfectly my sceptical disposition and principles.' Indolently to resign oneself to 'the current of nature' is the very perfection of scepticism. 'In all the incidents of life we ought still to preserve our scepticism. If we believe, that fire warms, or water refreshes, 'tis only because it costs us too much pains to think otherwise. Nay if we are philosophers, it ought only to be upon sceptical principles, and from an inclination, which we feel to the employing ourselves after that manner.' 'A true sceptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical conviction; and will never refuse any innocent satisfaction, which offers itself, upon account of either of them.'[2]

In the *Enquiry* Hume strikes a more positive note, and attempts the 'sceptical solution' of his sceptical doubts. He insists upon the merely theoretical significance of his scepticism. We need not fear 'that this philosophy, while it endeavours to limit our enquiries to common life, should ever undermine the reasonings of common life, and carry its doubts so far as to destroy all action, as well as speculation.' 'Custom is the great guide of human life. It is that principle alone which renders our experience useful to us, and makes us expect, for the future, a similar train of events with those which have appeared in the past.' In the fact that our expectations are determined by the constant conjunctions of our past experience he even finds assurance of the real significance of our reasonings about matters of fact. 'Here, then, is a kind of pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas; and though the powers and

[1] *Treatise*, bk. i. pt. iv. sect. 7. [2] *Loc. cit.*

forces, by which the former is governed, be wholly unknown to us; yet our thoughts and conceptions have still, we find, gone on in the same train with the other works of nature. Custom is that principle, by which this correspondence has been affected; so necessary to the subsistence of our species, and the regulation of our conduct, in every circumstance and occurrence of human life. Had not the presence of an object instantly excited the idea of those objects, commonly conjoined with it, all our knowledge must have been limited to the narrow sphere of our memory and senses; and we should never have been able to adjust means to ends, or employ our natural powers, either to the producing of good, or avoiding of evil.'[1] And the lesson which he draws from our inevitable ignorance of the nature of things is the same lesson as Locke had drawn from the narrow limits of human knowledge, namely, 'the limitation of our enquiries to such subjects as are best adapted to the narrow capacity of human understanding. . . . A correct *Judgement*, . . . avoiding all distant and high enquiries, confines itself to common life, and to such subjects as fall under daily practice and experience; leaving the more sublime topics to the embellishment of poets and orators, or to the arts of priests and politicians. To bring us to so salutary a determination, nothing can be more serviceable, than to be once thoroughly convinced of the force of the Pyrrhonian doubt, and of the impossibility, that anything, but the strong power of natural instinct, could free us from it. . . . While we cannot give a satisfactory reason, why we believe, after a thousand experiments, that a stone will fall, or fire burn; can we ever satisfy ourselves concerning any determination, which we may form, with regard to the origin of worlds, and the situation of nature, from, and to eternity?'[2]

The entire sceptical argument has reference, it will be remembered, only to our reasonings about matters of fact,

[1] *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, sect. v. pt. ii.
[2] *Ibid.*, sect. xii. pt. iii.

and does not affect our knowledge of the relations of ideas. Hume holds, with Locke, that while certain general propositions are merely verbal or 'trifling,' consisting in identical statements or definitions of terms, certain others are instructive, in spite of their generality. Of this type are the propositions which constitute 'the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic.' 'Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe. Though there never were a circle or triangle in nature, the truths demonstrated by Euclid would for ever retain their certainty and evidence.'[1] While the *Treatise* closes without explicit reference to the exclusion of the 'abstract sciences' from the scope of the sceptical conclusions of that work, the *Enquiry* contains an explicit statement on the subject, which is in keeping with its more positive spirit. 'It seems to me, that the only objects of the abstract sciences or of demonstration are quantity and number, and that all attempts to extend this more perfect species of reasoning beyond these bounds are mere sophistry and illusion. As the component parts of quantity and number are entirely similar, their relations become intricate and involved; and nothing can be more curious, as well as useful, than to trace, by a variety of mediums, their equality or inequality, through their different appearances. But as all other ideas are clearly distinct and different from each other, we can never advance farther, by our utmost scrutiny, than to observe this diversity, and, by an obvious reflection, pronounce one thing not to be another. . . . It is the same case with all those pretended syllogistical reasonings, which may be found in every other branch of learning, except the sciences of quantity and number; and these may safely, I think, be pronounced the only proper objects of knowledge and demonstration.'[2]

In the *Treatise*, however, it is clear that Hume disallows the exactitude of geometrical truth. He there

[1] *Enquiry*, sect. iv. pt. i.

[2] *Ibid.*, sect. xii. pt. iii.

seeks to give an empirical derivation of our ideas of space and time, as well as of our other ideas. The empirical basis of the idea of space is the impression of 'coloured and tangible points disposed in a certain way,' and Hume argues that the absolute quantities of geometrical science are no less illusory than identical material and spiritual substances. Even in the *Enquiry* he condemns the absurdities which result from the logical procedure of this science. 'The chief objection against all *abstract* reasonings is derived from the ideas of space and time; ideas, which, in common life, and to a careless view, are very clear and intelligible, but when they pass through the scrutiny of the profound sciences (and they are the chief object of these sciences) afford principles, which seem full of absurdity and contradiction. No priestly *dogmas*, invented on purpose to tame and subdue the rebellious reason of mankind, ever shocked common sense more than the doctrine of the infinite divisibility or extension, with its consequences; as they are pompously displayed by all geometricians and metaphysicians, with a kind of triumph and exultation. . . . But what renders the matter more extraordinary, is, that these seemingly absurd opinions are supported by a chain of reasoning, the clearest and most natural: nor is it possible for us to allow the premises without admitting the consequences.'[1] On the other hand, Hume has no such criticism to make in the case of the sciences of Number. 'We are possest of a precise standard, by which we can judge of the equality and proportion of numbers; and according as they correspond or not to that standard, we determine their relations, without any possibility of error. When two numbers are so combined, as that the one has always an unite answering to every unite of the other, we pronounce them equal; and 'tis for want of such a standard of equality in extension, that geometry can scarce be esteemed a perfect and infallible science.' 'There remain, therefore, algebra and arithmetic as the only sciences,

[1] Sect. xii. pt. ii.

in which we can carry on a chain of reasoning to any degree of intricacy, and yet preserve a perfect exactness and certainty.'[1] Even in the case of geometry, however, Hume holds that 'its mistakes can never be of any consequence.' 'And this,' he says, 'is the nature and use of geometry, to run us up to such appearances, as, by reason of their simplicity, cannot lead us into any considerable error.'[2]

Hume devotes the two remaining Books of the *Treatise* to that 'Human Nature' which 'is the only science of man, and yet has been hitherto the most neglected.' Book II. is concerned with the 'anatomy' of the Passions, Book III. with Morals. The former is full of psychological interest, and distinguished by its illuminating remarks on the subtler play of the elemental passions of our nature, but is not so directly the basis of the ethical theory offered in Book III. as to make any detailed account of it necessary to the understanding of the latter. In making the two leading principles Pride and Humility, on the one hand, and Love and Hatred on the other, Hume foreshadows the two governing principles of his ethical theory, self-regard and benevolence. In the importance he attaches to sympathy and in his reduction of the conflict between reason and passion to a conflict between the calm and the violent passions, he at once applies the principles of Book I. and anticipates the ethical teaching of Book III. The latter point is argued with no little insight. 'We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason. . . . A passion must be accompanied with some false judgment, in order to its being unreasonable; and even then 'tis not the passion, properly speaking, which is unreasonable, but the judgment. The consequences are evident. Since a passion can never, in any sense, be called unreasonable, but when founded on a false supposition, or when it chuses means insufficient for the designed end,

[1] *Treatise*, bk. i. pt. iii. sect. 1. [2] *Loc. cit.*

'tis impossible that reason and passion can ever oppose each other, or dispute for the government of the will and actions. The moment we perceive the falsehood of any supposition, or the insufficiency of any means, our passions yield to our reason without any opposition.'[1] Finally he seeks to show the truth of the doctrine of Book I.[2] 'that there is but one kind of *necessity*, as there is but one kind of cause, and that the common distinction between *moral* and *physical* necessity is without any foundation in nature,' arguing that the 'liberty' attributed to moral agents is the same thing as 'chance,' which simply means that the cause is unknown. The same argument is repeated in the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, where it is connected immediately with the general account of causation, and the attempt is made to show that such a view is compatible, as the doctrine of Liberty is not, with our ordinary judgments about human conduct and our ordinary conceptions of moral responsibility.[3]

The connexion of the general psychology of the passions with the ethical theory becomes more clear when we take account of Hume's opposition to the view, common to Locke and Cudworth, that ethics is a purely rational science, like mathematics. 'There has been an opinion very industriously propagated by certain philosophers, that morality is susceptible of demonstration; and tho' no one has ever been able to advance a single step in those demonstrations; yet 'tis taken for granted, that this science may be brought to an equal certainty with geometry or algebra.'[4] Against 'the system which establishes eternal rational measures of right and wrong' he urges that the distinction is one of sensibility, not of reason; that its basis is to be found, not in the object, but in the subject. 'The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn your reflexion into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action.

[1] *Treatise*, bk. ii. pt. iii. sect. 3.
[2] Pt. iii. sect. 14.
[3] *Enquiry*, sect. viii.
[4] *Treatise*, bk. iii. pt. i. sect. 1.

Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object. So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it.'[1] The 'ought' can never be deduced from the 'is,' the 'ought not' from the 'is not.' All that reason tells us is what is the tendency of actions, beneficial or hurtful, to ourselves or to others; it enables us to decide between 'obscure or opposite utilities.' Sentiment, or a preference of feeling, alone can decide in favour of the end,—the happiness, as distinguished from the misery, whether of ourselves or of others. 'Morality, therefore, is more properly felt than judged of'; it appeals to a 'moral sense' or disinterested preference of good to evil. 'As virtue is an end, and is desirable on its own account, without fee and reward, merely for the immediate satisfaction which it conveys; it is requisite that there should be some sentiment which it touches, some internal taste or feeling, or whatever you may please to call it, which distinguishes moral good and evil, and which embraces the one and rejects the other.'[2]

While Hume appears, in the *Enquiry*, to accept the 'moral sense' view, as already formulated by Hutcheson, and objects to a too 'systematic' explanation of our moral judgments, he seeks, in the *Treatise*, to reduce the sentiment of moral approval and disapproval to terms of regard for our own happiness, explaining it as a sympathetic appropriation of the consequences of our actions for the happiness of others, and insisting that we ought to aim at 'simplicity' in moral as in natural philosophy, and not to invent new principles where old ones are sufficient. Accordingly we find that while, in the *Treatise*, justice is regarded as the one great social virtue, in the *Enquiry* benevolence takes precedence of justice, and is explained as a general regard for the interests of humanity, as such; the principles of sympathy and association are no longer

[1] *Treatise*, bk. iii. pt. i. sect. 1. [2] *Enquiry*, App. I.

invoked in the explanation of justice; and a new emphasis is laid upon the essential disinterestedness of the passions, the indispensable instruments of a wise self-love.

In both works Hume insists upon the 'artificial' character of justice. It is the result of a conventional understanding between the members of a civilised society that they will abstain from the possessions of each other, a convention tacit and unexpressed, like that between the rowers who 'pull the oars by agreement or convention, tho' they have never given promises to each other.' It is a rule which 'arises gradually, and acquires force by a slow progression, and by our repeated experience of the inconveniences of transgressing it.' Justice is thus the machinery by which the individual secures his own interest. 'There is no passion . . . capable of controlling the interested affection, but the very affection itself, by an alteration of its direction.' If men were unselfish, or if nature offered in abundance all that was necessary to satisfy their every want, there would be no occasion for this mutual self-defence. ''Tis only from the selfishness and confined generosity of men, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, that justice derives its origin.' 'Instead of departing from our own interest, or from that of our nearest friends, by abstaining from the possessions of others, we cannot better consult both these interests, than by such a convention; because it is by that means we maintain society, which is so necessary to their well-being and subsistence, as well as to our own.'[1] But while, in the sense explained, justice has its origin in 'the artifice and contrivance of men,' it is in another and deeper sense natural. 'Mankind is an inventive species; and where an invention is obvious and absolutely necessary, it may as properly be said to be natural as anything that proceeds immediately from original principles, without the intervention of thought or reflexion. Tho' the rules of justice be *artificial*, they are not *arbitrary*. Nor is the expression improper to call

[1] *Treatise*, bk. iii. pt. ii. sect. 2.

them *Laws of Nature;* if by natural we understand what is common to any species, or even if we confine it to mean what is inseparable from the species.'[1]

In the *Enquiry*, the virtue of justice is subordinated to that of benevolence, or disinterested regard for the general happiness, which is accepted as the supreme end on 'the blind, but sure testimony of taste and sentiment.' This is the result, it is contended, of 'a natural, unforced interpretation of the phenomena of human life.' While, in the *Treatise*, it was maintained that 'the public good is indifferent to us, except so far as sympathy interests us in it,' the doctrine of the *Enquiry* is that 'the voice of nature and experience seems plainly to oppose the selfish theory.' 'We must renounce the theory, which accounts for every moral sentiment by the principle of self-love. We must adopt a more public affection, and allow, that the interests of society are not, even on their own account, entirely indifferent to us. . . . Everything, which contributes to the happiness of society, recommends itself directly to our approbation and goodwill.' 'It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have humanity or a fellow-feeling with others. It is sufficient, that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature. We must stop somewhere in our examination of causes; and there are, in every science, some general principles, beyond which we cannot hope to find any principle more general.'[2]

In the second Appendix to the *Enquiry* Hume bases his theory of the disinterestedness of our regard for the happiness of others upon a new psychology of the passions, which follows very closely Butler's account of the object of desire and its relation to self-love. In the *Treatise* he had maintained that ''tis from the prospect of pain or pleasure that the aversion or propensity arises towards any object.'[3] He now distinguishes between the original passion, which 'points immediately to the object, and constitutes it our good or happiness' and

[1] *Treatise*, bk. iii. pt. ii. sect. 1.
[2] *Enquiry*, sect. v. pt. ii.
[3] Bk. ii. pt. iii. sect. 3.

'other secondary passions which afterwards arise and pursue it as a part of our happiness.' 'Were there no appetite of any kind antecedent to self-love, that propensity could scarcely ever exert itself; because we should, in that case, have felt few and slender pains or pleasures, and have little misery or happiness to avoid or to pursue. Now where is the difficulty in conceiving, that this may likewise be the case with benevolence and friendship, and that, from the original frame of our temper, we may feel a desire of another's happiness or good, which, by means of that affection, becomes our own good, and is afterwards pursued, from the combined motives of benevolence and self-enjoyments? Who sees not that vengeance, from the force alone of passion, may be so eagerly pursued, as to make us knowingly neglect every consideration of ease, interest, or safety; and, like some vindictive animals, infuse our very souls into the wounds we give an enemy; and what a malignant philosophy must it be, that will not allow to humanity and friendship the same privileges which are undisputably granted to the darker passions of enmity and resentment; such a philosophy is more like a satyr than a true delineation or description of human nature; and may be a good foundation for paradoxical wit and raillery, but is a very bad one for serious argument or reasoning.'

But while the principle of benevolence or social utility is 'the *sole* source of that high regard paid to justice, fidelity, honour, allegiance, and chastity,' and is 'inseparable from all the other social virtues, humanity, generosity, charity, affability, lenity, mercy, and moderation,' and is therefore a foundation of the chief part of morals, which has a reference to mankind and our fellow-creatures,' it is not for Hume, as for Hutcheson, the all-inclusive ethical principle; virtue and benevolence are not convertible terms. Qualities of action and of character useful or immediately agreeable to ourselves are no less praiseworthy than those which are useful or immediately agreeable to others. Happiness is the only ultimate end, but it may be either our own or that of others; and Hume does not

doubt the harmony of these two ends. And when he comes, in the concluding section of the *Enquiry*,[1] to the consideration of obligation, he speaks of it as 'interested,' and identifies the question of obligation with the question 'whether every man, who has any regard to his own happiness and welfare, will not best find his account in the practice of every moral duty.' 'What theory of morals can ever serve any useful purpose, unless it can show, by a particular detail, that all the duties which it recommends, are also the true interest of each individual?' In proof of the truth of his own theory he points to the attractive picture of virtue which it offers, representing her 'in all her genuine and most engaging charms,' and making us 'approach her with ease, familiarity, and affection.' 'The sole trouble which she demands, is that of just calculation, and a steady preference of the greater happiness.' A true psychology of human passion or propensity shows that there is no more opposition between selfishness and benevolence than between selfishness and any other natural propensity, and that the presupposition of a true self-love is disinterested interest in the objects of these natural propensities. The only case in which a doubt is possible regarding the coincidence of virtue and self-interest is that of justice. 'But in all ingenuous natures, the antipathy to treachery and roguery is too strong to be counterbalanced by any views of profit or pecuniary advantage.' Such natures will indeed 'find their account' in virtue. 'Inward peace of mind, consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of our past conduct; these are circumstances very requisite to happiness, and will be cherished and cultivated by every honest man, who feels the importance of them.'

To the restatement of his philosophical views in the first *Enquiry* Hume added two essays in which he applies his general principles to the solution of the problems of Miracles, a Particular Providence and a Future State. It

[1] Sect. ix. pt. ii.

is significant that, while he had not in the *Treatise* even suggested any such applications, he should thus later have endangered the symmetry of the *Enquiry* by this addition. The explanation is to be found, I think, not so much in a desire to disturb 'the zealots' as in a deepening interest in such metaphysical and theological questions. His interest in the problem of knowledge itself had been long satisfied; other interests had since absorbed his mind. 'I have thought, and read, and composed very little on such questions of late,' he writes to Gilbert Elliot in 1751; 'Morals, Politics, and Literature have employed all my time.' Yet in the same letter he asks his friend's opinion and advice about those *Dialogues on Natural Religion* which, though they were not published until after his death, had been already written. In 1757 appeared, among the *Four Dissertations*, an essay which shows very considerable reading, as well as reflection, entitled *The Natural History of Religion*. These constitute Hume's contribution to the philosophy of religion.

The *Natural History of Religion* is of minor interest, though it shows Hume's sagacity in the adoption of the historical and comparative method of investigating the subject. Its main purpose is to prove that Theism is not the primary or universal, but a later and secondary form of the religious consciousness. The earliest product of the religious imagination, he insists, is not a single Author or Maker of the world, such as the world-order suggests to later reflection, but a number of beings fashioned in man's own image, 'intelligent, voluntary agents, like ourselves; only somewhat superior in power and wisdom.'[1] As one of these beings gradually rises to supremacy over the others, polytheism gives place to theism; while theism tends in turn to degenerate into polytheism. 'It is remarkable, that the principles of religion have a kind of flux and reflux in the human mind, and that men have a natural tendency to rise from idolatry to theism, and to sink again from theism into idolatry.'[2] The lesson which Hume

[1] *Nat. Hist. of Religion*, sect. v.

[2] *Ibid.*, sect. viii.

draws from the inevitableness of the process of degeneration and corruption in religion, from the impossibility of maintaining the distinction between genuine religion, the true ally of morality, and mere superstition, its enemy or at best its uncertain friend, is that of philosophical indifferentism. 'The whole is a riddle, an ænigma, an inexplicable mystery. Doubt, uncertainty, suspense of judgment appear the only result of our most accurate scrutiny concerning this subject. But such is the frailty of human reason, and such the irresistible contagion of opinion, that even this deliberate doubt could scarcely be upheld; did we not enlarge our view, and opposing one species of superstition to another, set them a quarrelling; while we ourselves, during their fury and contention, happily make our escape into the calm, though obscure, regions of philosophy.'[1]

The relation of the two essays, which were added to the first *Enquiry*, to the central philosophical positions of that work is really much closer than we might at first suppose. The argument against miracles is based upon the view of causation as identical with constant conjunction: a miracle is a contradiction of the uniformity of nature to which all our experience testifies, and is therefore incredible, no matter what the testimony in its favour may be. At the same time men's tendency to believe in the miraculous is explained in terms of that human nature which is, according to Hume, the ultimate term in all explanation. The argument for a particular Providence and future rewards and punishments rests, it is argued, upon a false view of causation, refusing as it does to interpret the cause in the light of the effect and adding causal factors for which we have no warrant in corresponding effects. It at the same time repudiates the empirical measure of reality which has been shown to be the only human measure of it.

In this essay we have, on a smaller scale, Hume's views on Natural Theology which are developed more fully in

[1] *Nat. Hist. of Religion*, sect. xv.

the *Dialogues on Natural Religion*. The position common to both is neither that of mere scepticism or atheism, on the one hand, nor that of theism, on the other, but that of agnostic deism or, as Professor Campbell Fraser calls it, 'attenuated theism.' The view which is controverted is that of a dogmatic and imaginative theism, based upon unwarranted anthropomorphism and resulting from 'enthusiasm,'—zeal uncontrolled by reason or experience. Huxley calls the view advocated in the *Dialogues* a 'shadowy and inconsistent theism,' and sees in it 'the expression of his desire to rest in a state of mind, which distinctly excluded negation, while it included as little as possible of affirmation, respecting a problem which he felt to be hopelessly insoluble.'[1]

The three interlocutors in the *Dialogues* are sufficiently characterised by Hume himself, who contrasts 'the accurate philosophical turn of Cleanthes' with 'the careless scepticism of Philo' and both with 'the rigid inflexible orthodoxy of Demea.' The affinity of the scepticism of Philo with the mysticism of Demea is emphasised in the course of the discussion, in which Philo accepts the term 'mystic' as their common designation; and so far as these two speakers are concerned, Hume's intention clearly is to reduce mysticism to scepticism, or unconscious to conscious scepticism, and thus to leave the issue between Philo and Cleanthes. He makes the narrator of the conversation say at the close: 'I confess, that, upon a serious review of the whole, I cannot but think that Philo's principles are more probable than Demea's; but that those of Cleanthes approach still nearer to the truth.' In a letter to Gilbert Elliot, already quoted, Hume says: 'You would observe by the sample I have given you, that I make Cleanthes the hero of the dialogue: whatever you can think of, to strengthen that side of the argument, will be most acceptable to me. Any propensity you imagine I have to the other side, crept in upon me against my will.' The position of

[1] *Hume*, in 'English Men of Letters,' p. 157.

Cleanthes is that of a philosophical theism which infers the divine intelligence and goodness from the marks of purpose in the world of our experience. 'I could wish,' he continues in this letter, 'Cleanthes' argument could be so analysed, as to be rendered quite formal and regular. The propensity of the mind towards it,—unless that propensity were as strong and universal as that to believe in our senses and experience,—will still, I am afraid, be esteemed a suspicious foundation. 'Tis here I wish for your assistance; we must endeavour to prove that this propensity is somewhat different from our inclination to find our own figures in the clouds, our faces in the moon, our passions and sentiments even in inanimate matter. Such an inclination may, and ought to be controlled, and can never be a legitimate ground of assent.'[1] He also speaks of 'the confusion in which I represent the sceptic,' and in a letter to Strahan, written shortly before his death, he says, 'I there introduce a Sceptic, who is indeed refuted, and at last gives up the Argument, nay confesses that he was only amusing himself by all his Cavils; yet before he is silenced, he advances several Topics, which will give Umbrage, and will be deemed very bold and free, as well as much out of the common Road.'[2] In the course of the argument, however, it will be found that, as we should expect, Philo's criticisms are made to tell heavily upon the positions of his opponent, which are seriously modified in consequence. The 'confusion' of Cleanthes is no less real than that of Philo; indeed, the latter succeeds in his argument, so far as it is seriously intended, and is not a mere *argumentum ad hominem*.

The question of the *Dialogues* is not that of the existence, but that of the nature of God. 'Surely,' says Philo, 'where reasonable men treat these subjects, the question can never be concerning the *Being*, but only the *Nature* of the Deity. The former truth, as you well observe, is unquestionable and self-evident. Nothing exists without a cause; and the original cause of this

[1] Burton's *Life*, i. 331–3. [2] *Letters to Strahan*, p. 330.

universe (whatever it be) we call God; and piously ascribe to him every species of perfection. . . . But as all perfection is entirely relative, we ought never to imagine, that we comprehend the attributes of this divine Being, or to suppose, that his perfections have any analogy or likeness to the perfections of a human creature. Wisdom, Thought, Design, Knowledge; these we justly ascribe to him; because these words are honourable among men, and we have no other language or other conceptions, by which we can express our adoration of him. But let us beware, lest we think, that our ideas any wise correspond to his perfections, or that his attributes have any resemblance to these qualities among men. He is infinitely superior to our limited view and comprehension; and is more the object of worship in the temple, than of disputation in the schools.'[1] The polemic of Philo is directed against the dogmatism and anthropomorphism of the theologians, against the exaggeration of the argument from analogy into a proof that the nature of God is the counterpart of that of man. The basis of this argument is found in the marks of design in the works of God in Nature; and it is the inference from design to the nature of God, not the actuality of design, that is criticised by Hume. The outcome of the discussion is to bring Philo and Cleanthes to agreement as to the actuality of design. 'In many views of the universe, and of its parts, particularly the latter, the beauty and fitness of final causes strike us with such irresistible force, that all objections appear (what I believe they really are) mere cavils and sophisms; nor can we then imagine how it was ever possible for us to repose any weight on them.'[2] 'A purpose, an intention, a design,' Philo says again, 'strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker; and no man can be so hardened in absurd systems, as at all times to reject it.'[3]

So far as the real question of the *Dialogues*—the question of the validity of the inference from design to the attri-

[1] *Dialogues*, pt. ii. [2] *Ibid.*, pt. x. [3] *Ibid.*, pt. xii.

butes which it implies in God—is concerned, Philo is made ultimately to assent, in a sense, to the inference to the divine intelligence. 'If we make it a question, whether, on account of these analogies, we can properly call him a *mind* or *intelligence*, notwithstanding the vast difference, which may reasonably be supposed between him and human minds; what is this but a mere verbal controversy? No man can deny the analogies between the effects: to restrain ourselves from enquiring concerning the causes is scarcely possible: from this enquiry, the legitimate conclusion is, that the causes have also an analogy: and if we are not contented with calling the first and supreme cause a God or Deity, but desire to vary the expression; what can we call him but Mind or Thought, to which he is justly supposed to bear a considerable resemblance?'[1] It is the moral part of the inference that proves intractable. The misery of the world, and especially of human life, may possibly be compatible with the goodness of God, but it certainly cannot form the ground of an inference to his goodness. 'Why is there any misery at all in the world? Not by chance surely. From some cause then. Is it from the intention of the Deity? But he is perfectly benevolent. Is it contrary to his intention? But he is almighty. Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive; except we assert, that these subjects exceed all human capacity, and that our common measures of truth and falsehood are not applicable to them; a topic which I have all along insisted on, but which you have, from the beginning, rejected with scorn and indignation. . . . Here, Cleanthes, I find myself at ease in my argument. Here I triumph. . . . There is no view of human life or of the condition of mankind, from which, without the greatest violence, we can infer the moral attributes, or learn that infinite benevolence, conjoined with infinite power and infinite wisdom, which we must discover by the eyes of faith alone.'[2] 'The true conclusion is, that

[1] *Loc. cit.* [2] *Ibid.*, pt. x.

the original source of all things is entirely indifferent to all these principles, and has no more regard to good above ill than to heat above cold, or to drought above moisture, or to light above heavy.'[1]

[1] *Ibid.*, pt. xi.

CHAPTER III

THE MORALISTS

1. *The Moral Sense School: Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Butler*

Like the rationalists of the seventeenth century, these moralists of the eighteenth were stimulated to ethical inquiry by opposition to the views of Hobbes. In Locke's view of moral obligation, however, they saw a restatement of Hobbes, which was all the more dangerous since it was less paradoxical and fell in more naturally with the current theological ideas. Locke, like Hobbes, had found the basis of moral obligation, though not the explanation of morality, in will, rather than in reason, but in the will of God rather than in that of the earthly sovereign. Locke, like Hobbes, had found the motive and sanction of virtue in self-interest, but in divine rather than in political rewards and punishments. The stress of the later polemic is rather upon the altruism than upon the rationality or absoluteness of morality. It is to be remembered that Hutcheson and Butler have in view the coarser version of egoism formulated by Mandeville in the *Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices Public Benefits*, and it cannot be doubted that it was this extreme and repulsive development of the implications of Hobbian and Lockian egoism that roused these moralists to the defence of the altruistic element in virtue.

In Shaftesbury we find all the characteristic positions of the school—generally known as the 'moral sense' school—already formulated, though it required the more elaborate and systematic restatements of his successors to make clear the full significance of these positions. The only real difference of opinion between them concerns the

place of benevolence and its relation to self-love on the one hand and to virtue, as such, on the other; and it is, on the whole, true to say that Butler corrects the exaggerated claim made by Hutcheson for benevolence, and re-affirms the more comprehensive view of the nature of virtue originally formulated by Shaftesbury. As regards the relation of virtue to the happiness of the virtuous agent, or to self-love, it will also be found that Butler does little more than restate the views of Shaftesbury. It is in the sphere of Natural Theology, rather than in that of Ethics, that Butler parts company with his predecessors, and develops the vague optimism of Shaftesbury into a novel and ingenious theory of his own devising.

Shaftesbury is not only the most original thinker but, on the whole, the best writer of the school. While it is doubtless an exaggeration to say, with Mackintosh, that 'no thinker so great was ever so bad a writer' as Butler, yet when compared with other English philosophers, both earlier and later, Butler cannot be called a good writer. On occasion he rises to something like eloquence, and in general is not lacking in impressiveness and individuality; it has been truly remarked that 'the lover of aphorisms might make an intertesting collection from the pages of Butler.'[1] But his style is careless and lacking in elegance and, above all, in the essential excellence of a philosophical style, clearness. Of Hutcheson, Mackintosh says that he is 'a chaste and simple writer, who imbibed the opinions, without the literary faults of his master, Shaftesbury. He has a charm of expression, and fulness of illustration, which are wanting in Butler'[2] Yet his writings fail entirely to suggest that gift of expression which, by general consent, was characteristic of his oral teaching; and if, as Leslie Stephen says, 'in striking contrast to Butler, he is smooth, voluble, and discursive,' yet 'the even flow of his eloquence is apt to become soporific.'[3]

[1] Lucas Collins, *Butler*, in 'Philosophical Classics,' p. 78.
[2] *Dissertation*, p. 204.
[3] *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 57.

Shaftesbury, on the other hand, is no less concerned about the form than about the substance of his philosophical work. Of all things he abhors what he calls the 'pedantry' and 'scholasticism' of the average and professional philosopher; in place of this he strives after 'wit' and 'good humour.' An enemy of 'enthusiasm,' he cultivates the art of satire or 'ridicule,' which he regards as the touchstone of truth. Deeply imbued with the classical philosophy, he attempts to revive the dialogue as a form of philosophical discussion. The result, however, is by no means entirely successful. His writing strikes the modern reader as too conscious, and not without a pedantry of its own. It is not only diffuse, reiterative, and unmethodical, but, as Fowler says, 'stilted,' marked by 'affectation' and 'a falsetto note.' Charles Lamb describes his style as 'lordly' and 'inflated': 'he seems to have written with his coronet on, and his earl's mantle before him.' Leslie Stephen speaks not unjustly of 'Shaftesbury's rather turbid eloquence'[1] and Mackintosh happily characterises the long and ambitious dialogue, *The Moralists*, as 'a modern antique.'[2] When compared not only with the dialogues of Plato, after which it was modelled, but with those of Berkeley, this work is felt to be almost entirely lacking in characterisation and dramatic movement.

The new answer to Hobbes finds its key in a new account of human nature, in a new psychological interpretation of the 'naturalness' of virtue. Virtue is the expression of the natural sociability or benevolence of man, rather than of the universal 'nature of things.' The psychological method is explicitly substituted for the rationalistic method of the earlier opponents of Hobbes. Shaftesbury, no less clearly than Butler, finds the clue to the nature of virtue in the 'economy' or 'constitution' of human nature. It is not merely that in that nature

[1] *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 57.
[2] *Dissertation*, p. 162.

there are social as well as self-regarding impulses or affections, but that the system of human nature as a whole points to the subordination of the self-regarding to the social affections as the essential feature of the 'natural' or virtuous life, because the means to the good of man, constituted as he is and placed in a network of relations to his fellow-men. 'The parts and proportions of the mind, their mutual relation and dependency, the connexion and frame of those passions which constitute the soul or temper, may easily be understood by any one who thinks it worth his while to study this inward anatomy.'[1]

It is because man is a rational being, 'capable of forming general notions of things,' that he has the capacity not merely of 'goodness,' but of 'virtue' or 'merit.' He can form such general notions of actions and affections, as well as of objects, 'so that, by means of this reflected sense, there arises another kind of affection towards those very affections themselves which have been already felt, and are now become the subject of a new liking or dislike.'[2] This 'moral sense' apprehends the beauty or deformity, the proportion or disproportion, of actions and affections. 'It feels the soft and harsh, the agreeable and disagreeable, in the affections; and finds a foul and fair, a harmonious and a dissonant, as really and truly here, as in any musical numbers, or in the outward forms or epresentations of sensible things. Nor can it withhold its admiration and extasy, its aversion and scorn, any more in what relates to one than to the other of these subjects.'[3]

The guiding notion or standard of virtue is that of 'a public interest': it is only from the point of view of social welfare that we discover 'the eternal measures, and immutable independent nature of worth and virtue.' 'To deserve the name of good or virtuous, a creature must have all his inclinations and affections, his dispositions of mind and temper, suitable, and agreeing with the good of his kind, or of that system in which he is included, and of which he constitutes a part. To stand thus well affected,

[1] *Characteristics*, ii. 83. [2] *Ibid.*, ii. 28. [3] *Ibid.*, ii. 29.

and to have one's affections right and entire, not only in respect of one's self, but of society and the public; this is rectitude, integrity, or virtue. And to be wanting in any of these, or to have their contraries, is depravity, corruption, and vice.'[1] Virtue implies, therefore, the subordination of the self-regarding to the social or public affections. 'There being allowed in a creature such affections as these towards the common Nature, or System of the Kind, together with those other which regard the private Nature, or Self-system; it will appear that in following the first of these affections, the creature must on many occasions, contradict and go against the latter. How else should the species be preserved?'[2] Truly understood, however, virtue consists rather in the harmony of the self-regarding with the social affections than in the triumph of the latter over the former. The lesser whole of the individual's own good is included in the larger whole or system of the social good. The 'Self-affections, which lead only to the Good of the Private,' are no less natural than those which 'lead to the Good of the Public.' From both alike Shaftesbury distinguishes the 'unnatural affections,' which tend neither to public nor to private good. The viciousness of the natural affections consists in their excessive or defective strength; and he recognises that 'as in particular cases, public affection, on the one hand, may be too high; so private affection may, on the other hand, be too weak. For if a creature be self-neglectful, and insensible of danger; or if he want such a degree of passion in any kind, as is useful to preserve, sustain, or defend himself; this must certainly be esteemed vicious, in regard of the design and end of nature.'[3] 'There are two things which to a rational creature must be horridly offensive and grievous; viz. "To have the reflection in his mind of any unjust action or behaviour, which he knows to be naturally odious and ill-deserving: or, of any foolish action or behaviour, which he knows to be prejudicial to his own interest or happiness."'[4] Here we have the

[1] *Characteristics*, ii. 77.
[2] *Ibid.*, ii. 78.
[3] *Ibid.*, ii. 89.
[4] *Ibid.*, ii. 119.

same distinction as that subsequently drawn by Butler between conscience and self-love; and Shaftesbury adds, 'The former of these is alone properly called Conscience; whether in a moral, or religious sense.'

Shaftesbury's great objection to the theological ethics of Locke and of popular opinion is that it destroys, with the disinterestedness, the reality of virtue. Action inspired by the motive of reward or punishment is, because self-interested, not truly virtuous. Not until a man 'is come to have any affection towards what is morally good, and can like or affect such good *for its own sake*, as good and amiable *in itself*,' can he rightly be called 'good and virtuous.'[1] The appeal to self-interest by rewards and punishments may be a means of moral education used by God, as it is used by parents and guardians and by the State; but its aim must be to educate us to the disinterested love of virtue and of supreme Goodness. Similarly, to make virtue dependent upon the will of God is to destroy the very idea of virtue, and to make the inference to supreme Goodness impossible. 'For how can Supreme Goodness be intelligible to those who know not what Goodness itself is? Or how can virtue be understood to deserve reward, when as yet its merit and excellence are unknown? We begin surely at the wrong end, when we would prove merit by favour, and order by a Deity.'[2] The alternative between a theological and an independent theory of ethics is, he holds, the alternative between ethical nominalism and realism. Shaftesbury's own view is that virtue is 'really something in itself and in the nature of things: not arbitrary or factitious . . . constituted from without, or dependent on custom, fancy, or will: not even on the Supreme Will itself, which can no way govern it: but being necessarily good, is governed by it, and ever uniform with it.'[3]

On the other hand, Shaftesbury finds it necessary, in order to account for the 'obligation' to virtue or the

[1] *Characteristics*, ii. 66. [2] *Ibid.*, ii. 267. [3] *Loc. cit.*

'reason to embrace it,' to maintain the complete coincidence between virtue and self-interest, or that 'to be well affected towards the Public Interest and one's own, is not only consistent, but inseparable: and that Moral Rectitude, or Virtue, must accordingly be the advantage, and Vice the injury and disadvantage of every creature.'[1] He argues '(i.) That to have the natural, kindly, or generous affections strong and powerful towards the good of the public, is to have the chief means and power of self-enjoyment, and that to want them, is certain misery and ill; (ii.) That to have the private or self-affections too strong, or beyond their degree of subordinacy to the kindly and natural, is also miserable; (iii.) That to have the unnatural affections . . . is to be miserable in the highest degree.'[2] It is impossible to read his impressive and subtle argument without feeling how much Butler must have been indebted to Shaftesbury in his better-known plea for the superior wisdom of a rational self-love to that excessive preoccupation with our own interest to which a blind selfishness would prompt us, if not also in his theory of the objective or disinterested character of desire.

In spite of his insistence upon the harmony of virtue and self-interest, or of the self-regarding with the social affections, Shaftesbury is convinced that the good is not pleasure. 'When Will and Pleasure are synonymous; when everything which pleases us is called pleasure, and we never chuse or prefer but as we please, 'tis trifling to say, "Pleasure is our Good." For this has as little meaning as to say, "We chuse what we think eligible"; and, "We are pleased with what delights or pleases us." The question is, Whether we are rightly pleased, and chuse as we should do.'[3] The good is not mere satisfaction or pleasure, but that which satisfies man as man. Shaftesbury clearly states the alternative between a subjective or hedonistic and an objective or idealistic interpretation of Good. 'Either that is every man's good which he fancies,

[1] *Characteristics*, ii. 81. [2] *Ibid.*, ii. 98. [3] *Ibid.*, ii. 226, 227.

and because he fancies it, and is not content without it: or otherwise, there is that in which the nature of man is satisfied; and which alone must be his good. If that in which the nature of man is satisfied, and can rest contented, be alone his good; then he is a fool who follows that with earnestness, as his good, which a man can be without, and yet be satisfied and contented.'[1]

Hutcheson, while in essential agreement with Shaftesbury, differs from him in the prominence assigned to the 'moral sense' and in the emphasis placed upon benevolence as the sum of virtue. 'His principal design,' he tell us in the Preface to the 'Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue,' 'is to show that Human Nature was not left indifferent in the affair of Virtue, to form to itself observations concerning the advantage, or disadvantage, of actions, and accordingly to regulate its conduct. . . . The Author of Nature has much better furnished us for a virtuous conduct, than our moralists seem to imagine, by almost as quick and powerful instructions, as we have for the preservation of our bodies. He has given us strong affections to be the springs of each virtuous action; and made Virtue a lovely Form, that we might easily distinguish it from its contrary, and be made happy by the pursuit of it.' We have a 'moral sense of beauty in actions and affections,' 'a relish for a beauty in character, in manners.' The æsthetic aspect of morality, already prominent in Shaftesbury's theory, becomes therefore still more prominent in that of Hutcheson, who is specially concerned to show that virtue is not 'austere and ungainly,' but beautiful and attractive. Shaftesbury had emphasised the rationality, as well as the beauty of virtue; for Hutcheson its quality is purely æsthetic. While he carefully distinguishes the doctrine of the 'moral sense' from that of 'innate ideas,' the former being simply that we have a natural susceptibility to moral distinctions which is developed and educated by moral experience, he finds

[1] *Characteristics*, ii. 436.

in this susceptibility the great evidence of the naturalness of virtue, as answering to 'the very frame of our nature.'

Hutcheson is not satisfied with the affirmation of the disinterestedness of the 'moral sense,' or approval of virtue and disapproval of vice. He maintains that the content of virtue is benevolence, or regard for the general happiness. 'If we examine all the actions which are counted amiable anywhere, and inquire into the grounds upon which they are approved, we shall find that in the opinion of the person who approves them, they always appear as benevolent, or flowing from good-will to others, and a study of their happiness.'[1] As 'that action is best which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers,'[2] so is that agent most virtuous the purity of whose intention to minister to the greatest general happiness is least corrupted by thoughts of self-seeking.

It would seem to follow that the life of ideal virtue excludes regard for our own good or happiness. Hutcheson holds, however, that actions proceeding from self-love are strictly of neutral moral quality, innocent rather than vicious. 'The actions which flow solely from self-love, and yet evidence no want of benevolence, having no hurtful effects upon others, seem perfectly indifferent in a moral sense, and neither raise the love or hatred of the observer.'[3] They belong to the sphere of natural, rather than to that of moral good. But the one sphere may easily overlap the other, and natural good may become moral. 'He who pursues his own private good with an intention also to concur with that constitution which tends to the good of the whole; and much more he who promotes his own good, with a direct view of making himself more capable of serving God, or doing good to mankind, acts not only innocently, but also honourably and virtuously: for in both these cases benevolence concurs with self-love to excite him to the action. And thus a neglect of our own good may be

[1] *Inquiry*, p. 166. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 181. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

morally evil, and argue a want of benevolence toward the whole.'[1] Nay, he goes on to argue, self-love, as such, may be interpreted as, in the last analysis, a form of benevolence. Since 'every moral agent justly considers himself as a part of this rational system which may be useful to the whole, . . . he may be, in part, an object of his own benevolence. . . . A man surely of the strongest benevolence may justly treat himself as he would do a third person, who was a competitor of equal merit with the other; and as his preferring one to another, in such a case, would argue no weakness of benevolence, so, no more would he evidence it by preferring himself to a man of only equal abilities.'[2] He also follows Shaftesbury in maintaining the coincidence of benevolence with a wise self-love ('universal benevolence tends to the happiness of the benevolent'), and distinguishes 'calm self-love' from 'particular passions,' and 'calm good-will' or benevolence from 'passionate love.'

While Butler is concerned, like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, to vindicate the 'naturalness' of benevolent or altruistic conduct, he is led by the undue emphasis placed by Hutcheson upon benevolence as the sum of virtue to insist, with Shaftesbury, upon the claims of self-love as an element in the life of complete virtue. His *Sermons* were first published in the year after the publication of Hutcheson's *Inquiry*, but had been written during the preceding eight years. In the *Dissertation*, 'Of the Nature of Virtue,' appended to the *Analogy*, published in 1736, he explicitly repudiates the doctrine, held by 'some of great and distinguished merit,' that 'the whole of virtue consists in singly aiming, according to the best of their judgment, at promoting the happiness of mankind in the present state; and the whole of vice, in doing what they foresee, or might foresee, is likely to produce an overbalance of unhappiness in it; than which mistakes, none can be conceived more terrible. For it is certain that some of the most shocking instances

[1] *Inquiry*, p. 176. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 177–8.

of injustice, adultery, murder, perjury, and even of persecution, may, in many supposable cases, not have the appearance of being likely to produce an overbalance of misery in the present state; perhaps sometimes may have the contrary appearance. . . . The happiness of the world is the concern of Him, Who is the Lord and the Proprietor of it: nor do we know what we are about, when we endeavour to promote the good of mankind in any ways, but those which He has directed; that is indeed in all ways not contrary to veracity and justice. . . . And though it is our business and our duty to endeavour, within the bounds of veracity and justice, to contribute to the ease, convenience, and even cheerfulness and diversion of our fellow-creatures; yet, from our short views, it is greatly uncertain, whether this endeavour will in particular instances produce an overbalance of happiness upon the whole; since so many and distant things must come into the account.'

In place of such a utilitarian estimate of virtue Butler affirms an intuitional theory. 'The fact appears to be, that we are constituted so as to condemn falsehood, unprovoked violence, injustice, and to approve of benevolence to some preferably to others, abstracted from all consideration, which conduct is likeliest to produce an overbalance of happiness or misery.' Virtue, thus understood, includes benevolence, but is not synonymous with it. In the Preface to the second edition of the *Sermons*, published in 1729, four years after the appearance of Hutcheson's *Inquiry*, he says: 'Everything is what it is, and not another thing. The goodness or badness of actions does not arise from hence, that the epithet, interested or disinterested, may be applied to them, any more than any other indifferent epithet, suppose inquisitive or jealous, may or may not be applied to them; not from their being attended with present or future pleasure or pain; but from their being what they are; namely, what becomes such creatures as we are, what the state of the case requires, or the contrary. Or, in other words, we may judge and determine, that an action is good or

evil, before we so much as consider, whether it be interested or disinterested.'[1]

Butler is not content with the denial of the identity of benevolence and virtue; he insists upon the equal claims of self-love or self-interest as a principle of virtuous action. 'Self-love in its due degree is as just and morally good as any affection whatever.'[2] The cause of vice is to be sought rather in the undue strength of 'the particular passions' than in self-love. 'Upon the whole, if the generality of mankind were to cultivate within themselves the principle of self-love; if they were to accustom themselves often to set down and consider what was the greatest happiness they were capable of attaining for themselves in this life, and if self-love were so strong and prevalent, as that they would uniformly pursue this their supposed chief temporal good, without being diverted from it by any particular passion, it would manifestly prevent numberless follies and vices. This was in a great measure the Epicurean system of philosophy. It is indeed by no means the religious or even moral institution of life. Yet, with all the mistakes men would fall into about interest, it would be less mischievous than the extravagances of mere appetite, will, and pleasure; for certainly self-love, though confined to the interest of this life, is, of the two, a much better guide than passion, which has absolutely no bound or measure, but what is set to it by this self-love, or moral considerations.'[3] Again, in the *Dissertation*, he says: 'It should seem that a due concern about our own interest or happiness, and a reasonable endeavour to secure and promote it, which is, I think, very much the meaning of the word *prudence*, in our language; it should seem that this is virtue, and the contrary behaviour faulty and blamable; since, in the calmest way of reflection, we approve of the first, and condemn the other conduct, both in ourselves and others.' Hence he concludes that 'prudence is a species of virtue, and folly of vice: meaning by *folly*

[1] *Sermons*, Preface, sect. 39 (Bernard's ed.).
[2] *Loc. cit.*
[3] *Sermons*, Preface, sects. 39–41.

somewhat quite different from mere incapacity, a thoughtless want of that regard and attention to our own happiness, which we had capacity for.' 'The faculty within us, which is the judge of actions, approves of prudent actions, and disapproves imprudent ones.'

Self-love and benevolence, then, or the consideration of our own happiness and that of others, as such, are for Butler two equally rational principles of action, whose office is to regulate the particular passions and affections. 'As human nature is not one simple uniform thing, but a composition of various parts, body, spirit, appetites, particular passions, and affections; for each of which reasonable self-love would lead men to have due regard, and make suitable provision: so society consists of various parts, to which we stand in different respects and relations; and just benevolence would as surely lead us to have due regard to each of these, and behave as the respective relations require.'[1] Action in accordance with these principles is natural in another sense than that in which action in accordance with a particular appetite or affection is natural: it is action in accordance with the constitution of human nature as a whole, not merely in accordance with present impulse. In the case of benevolence, as well as in that of self-love, it is necessary to distinguish the rational from the 'passionate' principle. 'When benevolence is said to be the sum of virtue, it is not spoken of as a blind propension, but as a principle in reasonable creatures, and so to be directed by their reason: for reason and reflection comes into our notion of a moral agent. And that will lead us to consider distant consequences, as well as the immediate tendency of an action: it will teach us that the care of some persons, suppose children and families, is particularly committed to our charge by Nature and Providence; as also that there are other circumstances, suppose friendship or former obligations, which require that we do good to some, preferably to others. . . . Thus, upon supposition that it were in

[1] *Sermon* xii. sect. 29.

the strictest sense true, without limitation, that benevolence includes in it all virtues; yet reason must come in as its guide and director, in order to attain its own end, the end of benevolence, the greatest public good.'[1]

It is in the ability to guide his conduct, not merely by 'instincts and propensions,' but by reflection upon the results of following such natural impulses, that Butler sees the distinctive element in human nature. The natural impulse rests in its object as an end or good; reflective self-love and benevolence regard the objects of natural impulse as means to the good or happiness of the individual and of other individuals respectively. Self-loving and benevolent actions are, therefore, species of virtue, as conduct determined by impulse, and contrary to these principles, is a species of vice. These principles are however, only two species of the genus virtue. The principle of virtuous conduct, as such, is conscience, which considers not the consequences of actions, but their appropriateness or inappropriateness to human nature as a constitution or economy. It checks and limits the authority of self-love and benevolence by considerations peculiar to itself, considerations not of happiness or misery, but of right and wrong. 'Let any plain honest man, before he engages in any course of action, ask himself: Is this I am going about right, or is it wrong? Is it good, or is it evil? I do not in the least doubt, but that this question would be answered agreeably to truth and virtue, by almost any fair man in almost any circumstances.'[2]

The æsthetic and emotional element in the 'moral sense' of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson entirely disappears; conscience is for Butler a purely rational principle. The question of obligation is also for the first time answered without hesitation in purely rational terms. 'Allowing that mankind hath the rule of right within himself, yet it may be asked, "What obligations are we under to attend and follow it?" I answer: it has been proved that man by his nature is a law to himself, without the particular

[1] *Sermon* xii. sect. 27.

[2] *Sermon* iii. sect. 4.

distinct consideration of the positive sanctions of that law; the rewards and punishments which we feel, and those which from the light of reason we have ground to believe are annexed to it. The question then carries its own answer along with it. Your obligation to obey this law, is its being the law of your nature. That your conscience approves of and attests to such a course of action, is itself alone an obligation. Conscience does not only offer itself to show us the way we should walk in, but it likewise carries its own authority with it, that it is our natural guide; the guide assigned us by the Author of our nature: it therefore belongs to our condition of being, it is our duty to walk in that path, and follow this guide, without looking about to see whether we may not possibly forsake them with impunity.'[1] It is here that Butler finds the theory of Shaftesbury inadequate: that writer has failed to follow out the implication of his own view that virtue is determined by the constitution of human nature. 'The very constitution of our nature requires, that we bring our whole conduct before this superior faculty; wait its determination; enforce upon ourselves its authority, and make it the business of our lives, as it is absolutely the whole business of a moral agent, to conform ourselves to it.'[2] Even if the obligations of conscience should conflict with those of self-love, the latter must yield unquestioningly to the former. We are not, in such a case, 'under two contrary obligations, *i.e.* under none at all.' 'The obligation on the side of interest really does not remain. For the natural authority of the principle of reflection is an obligation the most near and intimate, the most certain and known; whereas the contrary obligation can at the utmost appear no more than probable; since no man can be *certain* in any circumstances that vice is his interest in the present world, much less can he be certain against another; and thus the certain obligation would entirely supersede and destroy the uncertain one.' 'The greatest

[1] *Sermon* iii. sect. 5.

[2] *Sermons*, Preface, sect. 25.

degree of scepticism . . . will still leave men under the strictest moral obligations, whatever their opinion be concerning the happiness of virtue.'[1]

Yet Butler finds it necessary to affirm 'the happy tendency of virtue.' He is especially anxious to show the complete coincidence of benevolence and self-love: that 'though benevolence and self-love are different; though the former tends most directly to public good, and the latter to private, yet they are so perfectly coincident, that the greatest satisfactions to ourselves depend upon our having benevolence in a due degree; and that self-love is one chief security of our right behaviour towards society.'[2] His chief contribution here lies in his demonstration of the disinterested character of all desire, directed as it is, not to our own pleasure or satisfaction, but to the attainment of its own appropriate object. Otherwise he does little more than repeat the arguments of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson about the happiness of benevolent, as compared with that of self-seeking, activity. It is to be remembered that Butler's aim in thus seeking to reconcile benevolence, and virtue generally, with the apparently opposing claims of self-interest, as well as in emphasising the principle of self-love, is, as he himself says, 'to obviate that scorn which one sees rising upon the faces of people who are said to know the world, when mention is made of a disinterested, generous or public-spirited action.'[3] Butler's purpose in the *Sermons* was rather practical than purely theoretical; and in his case as in others, 'the doctrine of moral consequences was had recourse to by the divines and moralists as the most likely remedy of the prevailing licentiousness.'[4]

The coincidence of virtue and happiness, the harmony of conscience and self-love, is however, at best, uncertain, so far as the present world is concerned. 'It must be owned a thing of difficulty to weigh and balance pleasures and uneasinesses, each amongst themselves, and also against each other, so as to make an estimate with any

[1] *Sermons*, Pref., sects. 26, 27.
[2] *Sermon* i. sect. 6.
[3] *Sermons*, Pref., sect. 38.
[4] Mark Pattison, *Essays*, ii. 114.

exactness, of the overplus of happiness on the side of virtue. And it is not impossible that, amidst the infinite disorders of the world, there may be exceptions to the happiness of virtue.'[1] 'Virtue, to borrow the Christian allusion, is militant here; and various untoward accidents contribute to its being often overborne: but it may combat with greater advantage hereafter, and prevail completely, and enjoy its consequent rewards, in some future states.'[2] Nay, it follows from the moral perfection of God 'that virtue must be the happiness, and vice the misery, of every creature; and that regularity and order and right cannot but prevail finally in a universe under His government.'[3] As against the superficial optimism of the deists, and more especially of Shaftesbury, Butler emphasises the 'difficulties' which beset our interpretation of the moral order, and insists that, since the system of nature is to be traced to the same Author as the system of religion, natural and revealed, the same kind of difficulties are to be expected in the latter as in the former sphere. The exhibition of this 'analogy' is the aim of his great apology for the Christian faith. The defence rests upon the inevitable limitations of human knowledge, which imply that such 'difficulties' must always exist for us. His aim is not to prove the rationality of Christianity or its certain truth, but merely its credibility, its probability.

Probability, not certainty, he maintains, is the guide of human life. He recalls to a dogmatic and rationalistic age Locke's lesson of the deficiency of man's knowledge and of the indispensable part which 'opinion,' more or less probable, must play in the life of such a being as man. 'Probable evidence, in its very nature, affords but an imperfect kind of information; and is to be considered as relative only to beings of limited capacities. For nothing which is the possible object of knowledge, whether past, present, or future, can be probable to an infinite Intelligence; since it cannot but be discerned absolutely

[1] *Analogy*, pt. i. ch. iii. sect. 5 (Bernard).
[2] *Ibid.*, pt. i. ch. iii. sect. 20.
[3] *Ibid.*, Introd., sect. 10.

as it is in itself, certainly true, or certainly false. But to Us, probability is the very guide of life.'[1]

The characteristic lesson of the Baconian and the Lockian philosophy, that of the dependence of knowledge upon experience, is reasserted by Butler, in opposition to the rationalism of his own age. 'Forming our notions of the constitution and government of the world upon reasoning, without foundation for the principles which we assume, whether from the attributes of God, or anything else, is building a world upon hypothesis like Des Cartes. . . . But it must be allowed just, to join abstract reasonings with the observation of facts, and argue from such facts as are known, to others that are like them; from that part of the Divine government over intelligent creatures which comes under our view, to that larger and more general government over them which is beyond it; and from what is present, to collect what is likely, credible, or not incredible, will be hereafter.'[2] His final objection to *a priori* argumentation is that 'we have not faculties for this kind of speculation.'[3] Human reason is not tainted with any incurable weakness. We must beware of 'vilifying the faculty of reason which is "the candle of the Lord within us," though it can afford no light where it does not shine; nor judge, when it has no principles to judge upon.'[4] It requires the premises of fact as a basis for its procedure. We must always start with 'the known constitution and course of things,' 'the constitution of nature is as it is'; 'things are what they are, and their consequences will be what they will be;' 'it is fit things be stated and considered as they really are.' So far as the ability to predict the course of things, apart from experience, is concerned, our ignorance is profound. 'Any one thing whatever may, for ought we know to the contrary, be a necessary condition to any other.'[5] 'It is indeed in general no more than effects, that the most knowing are acquainted with:

[1] *Analogy*, Introd., sect. 3.
[2] *Ibid.*, Introd., sect. 7.
[3] *Ibid.*, Introd., sect. 10.
[4] *Ibid.*, pt. ii., Concl., sect. 2.
[5] *Ibid.*, pt. i. ch. vii. sect. 3.

for as to causes, they are as entirely in the dark as the most ignorant. What are the laws by which matter acts upon matter, but certain effects; which some, having observed to be frequently repeated, have reduced to general rules?'[1]

In such sentences Butler seems to anticipate the thorough-going empiricism of Hume. But it never occurs to him to deduce Hume's sceptical conclusion from the merely empirical character of human knowledge. The conclusion he draws is rather Locke's than Hume's. 'After all, the same account is to be given, why we were placed in these circumstances of ignorance, as why nature has not furnished us with wings; namely, that we were designed to be inhabitants of this earth. I am afraid we think too highly of ourselves; of our rank in the creation, and of what is due to us. What sphere of action, what business is assigned to man, that he has not capacities and knowledge fully equal to? . . . If to acquire knowledge were our proper end, we should indeed be but poorly provided: but if somewhat else be our business and duty, we may, notwithstanding our ignorance, be well enough furnished for it; and the observation of our ignorance may be of assistance to us in the discharge of it.'[2] 'Since the constitution of nature, and the methods and designs of Providence in the government of the world, are above our comprehension, we should acquiesce in, and rest satisfied with, our ignorance, turn our thoughts from that which is above and beyond us, and apply ourselves to that which is level to our capacities, and which is our real business and concern. Knowledge is not our proper happiness.'[3] Like Bacon and Locke, Butler finds the measure of the value of knowledge in its practical utility, in its significance for action. 'Men of deep research and curious inquiry should just be put in mind, not to mistake what they are doing. If their discoveries serve the cause of virtue and religion, in the way of proof, motive to practice, or assistance in it; or if

[1] *Sermon* xv. sect. 5. [2] *Ibid.*, sect. 10. [3] *Ibid.*, sect. 16.

they tend to render life less unhappy, and promote its satisfactions; then they are most usefully employed: but bringing things to light, alone and of itself, is of no manner of use, any otherwise than as an entertainment or diversion. Neither is this at all amiss, if it does not take up the time which should be employed in better work. But it is evident that there is another mark set up for us to aim at; another end appointed us to direct our lives to; an end, which the most knowing may fail of, and the most ignorant arrive at. . . . The only knowledge, which is of any avail to us, is that which teaches us our duty, or assists us in the discharge of it. . . . Our province is virtue and religion, life and manners; the science of improving the temper, and making the heart better. This is the field assigned us to cultivate. . . . He who should find out one rule to assist us in this work, would deserve infinitely better of mankind, than all the improvers of other knowledge put together.'[1]

The argument of the *Analogy* belongs rather to the province of Christian apologetics than to that of philosophy proper. It is concerned, moreover, with a now antiquated controversy; as an *argumentum ad hominem* to the deists of the eighteenth century, it has lost most of its interest for us. As Matthew Arnold finely expressed it, 'It has the effect upon me, as I contemplate it, of a stately and severe fortress, with thick and high walls, built of old to control the kingdom of evil;—but the gates are open, and the guards gone.'[2] It is unfair and beside the point to criticise it as a metaphysical argument, and to remark Butler's 'feebleness in dealing with purely metaphysical questions.'[3] He never deals with purely metaphysical questions. It is true that 'he has taken for granted . . . the answers to the most vital questions of philosophy';[4] but he has done so deliberately, because on these vital questions of philosophy—the questions of the existence of

[1] *Sermon* xv. sect. 16.
[2] *Last Essays on Church and Religion*, p. 140.
[3] Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, i. 298.
[4] *Ibid.*, i. 304.

God as not only the Creator but the moral Governor of the world, the freedom of man as a moral agent, his personality, and the future life of the individual—there was no difference of opinion between himself and his opponents. His only difference with them was on the question of the credibility of a Revelation, and therefore of Christianity as a religious system; and Butler's whole effort is directed to convince them that, if they are to be consistent with the views of God, of nature, and of man which they share with him, they must admit the credibility of the Christian Revelation, and therefore the reasonableness of acting on the hypothesis of its truth.

2. *Association and Sympathy as Explanations of the Moral Sense: Hartley and Adam Smith*

The doctrine of the ultimateness and simplicity of the 'moral sense,' common to Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Butler, is repudiated by Hartley and Adam Smith, the former explaining it in terms of Association, the latter in terms of Sympathy. In the Preface to the *Observations on Man*, published in 1749, Hartley acknowledges his indebtedness to an earlier writer, the Rev. John Gay, who, in a 'Dissertation concerning the Principle and Criterion of Virtue and the Origin of the Passions,' prefixed to Law's translation of King's *Origin of Evil* (1731), had 'asserted the possibility of deducing all our intellectual pleasures and pains from association.' 'This put me upon considering the power of association. . . From enquiring into the power of association I was led to examine both its consequences, in respect of morality and religion, and its physical cause.' Gay's little work is really of great importance for the doctrines both of Associationism and of Utilitarianism. The 'moral sense' and 'public affections,' to which Hutcheson had so confidently appealed, are not, he argues, original instincts. To regard them as such is, he thinks, 'rather cutting the knot than untying it.' The ultimate end to which both point is 'our

private happiness,' and 'whenever this end is not perceived, they are to be accounted for from the Association of Ideas, and may properly enough be called Habits.' 'These approbations and affections are not innate or implanted in us by way of instinct, but are all acquired, being fairly deducible from supposing only sensible and rational creatures dependent on each other for their happiness.' The association of objects and actions with the pleasures and pains which result from them not only accounts for the transposition of ends and means, as in the case of the love of money, but, as this case also illustrates, may persist after the ends to which they minister are forgotten or even abandoned.

Of Hartley, Mackintosh justly observes that 'his style is entitled to no praise but that of clearness, and a simplicity of diction, through which is visible a singular simplicity of mind.'[1] He has no faculty of illustration, and his work is deformed by an affectation of the method of geometrical demonstration, reminiscent of the previous century. Its interest and value are also injured by its rather clumsy but persistent effort to connect mental phenomena with the 'vibrations' and 'vibratiuncles' in the 'medullary substance' of the brain which form their physical concomitants. The chief influences to be traced in his thinking are those of Locke and Newton; and it is rather the ideal of the Newtonian physics than than of the Lockian psychology that is decisive. While he seeks, under the influence of Locke, to reduce the complexity of the mental life to its origin in sensation, holding that 'reflection is not a distinct source, as Mr. Locke makes it,'[2] he also 'seeks to do for human nature what Newton did for the solar system. Association is for man what gravitation is for the planets.'[3] At the same time, it is clear that he 'was hardly alive to the tendency of his own method.'[4] That tendency clearly is in the direction of the materialism

[1] *Dissertation*, p. 253.
[2] *Observations*, i. 360.
[3] Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 66.
[4] *Ibid.*, i. 68.

to which it was reduced by Priestley and Erasmus Darwin. It is perhaps not going too far to say, with Stephen, that 'his system clearly renders a soul a superfluity, if not an anomaly,' that 'the will, the thoughts, and the emotions, not only result from, but, as it would seem, are "vibratiuncles"';[1] and while he insists upon the disparateness of the psychical and the physical phenomena, he frankly accepts, as the logical consequence of 'the doctrines of association and mechanism,' the necessity of human actions, the argument for which has never been better stated. But it is impossible to reconcile his undiscriminating acceptance of theological dogma with his scientific method; he is truly described by his son,[2] as 'a partizan for the Christian religion.'

It is not in the statement of the principle of Association, but in its application, that the chief interest of Hartley's treatment of the subject lies. So far as the principle itself is concerned, his view of it practically anticipates the view of present psychology, reducing association to the single principle of contiguity, or the tendency of ideas which have occurred together, or in immediate succession, to recur together or to recall one another It is in the application of this principle to the entire mental life, and especially to the feelings and to the 'moral sense,' that his originality consists. In the use of it as explaining the genesis of conscience, moreover, he recognises two truths of the greatest significance: first, that the product of the association of old ideas may be an idea quite new, in the sense of being different from the mere sum of its component factors; secondly, that 'that which is prior in the order of nature is always less perfect and principal than that which is posterior.' His aim, accordingly, is to trace the gradual evolution of the higher pleasures out of the lower, of the later out of the earlier—the progress from the pleasures of sensation and self-interest to those of 'perfect self-annihilation and the pure love of God.'

[1] Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 65.

[2] In the *Life* prefixed to the 'Notes and Additions' by Pistorius, which forms the third volume of the *Observations*.

'And thus we may perceive, that all the pleasures and pains of sensation, imagination, ambition, self-interest, sympathy, and theopathy, as far as they are consistent with one another, with the frame of our natures, and with the course of the world, beget in us a moral sense, and lead us to the love and approbation of virtue, and to the fear, hatred, and abhorrence of vice. This moral sense, therefore, carries its own authority with it, inasmuch as it is the sum total of all the rest, and the ultimate result from them; and employs the force and authority of the whole nature of man against any particular part of it, that rebels against the determinations and commands of the conscience or moral judgment. It appears also that the moral sense carries us perpetually to the pure love of God, as our highest and ultimate perfection, our end, centre, and only resting-place, to which we can never attain.'[1] Yet he holds that 'the love of God affords a pleasure which is superior in kind and degree to all the rest, of which our natures are capable,'[2] and that this follows from 'the frame of our nature, and particularly its subjection to the power of association' or the tendency 'to connect God with each [pleasure] as its sole cause.'[3]

In the ethical psychology of Hartley, as well as in that of Hutcheson and of Hume, sympathy occupied a place of much importance, but the point of view was still essentially individualistic. It was left to Adam Smith to attempt for the first time the explanation of the individual conscience from the social point of view, and to make sympathy the central principle of ethical psychology. This account of the place of sympathy in the moral consciousness is offered as a substitute at once for the view of Hutcheson, that the moral sense is an original and simple faculty, and for the view of Hume, that utility, as such, is morally approved. While admitting the general coincidence of propriety with utility, Smith distinguishes the 'sense of propriety' from 'the perception of utility,' but

[1] *Observations*, i. 497. [2] *Ibid.*, ii. 311. [3] *Ibid.*, ii. 313.

insists, at the same time, that the sense of propriety is always, in its origin, and potentially if not actually, a sympathetic sense. It is in its emphasis on the social aspect of conscience, and in its careful analysis of the ethical function of sympathy, that the originality of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* consists.

To approve or disapprove of the affections of others, that is, to judge of their propriety or impropriety, is to sympathise or not to sympathise with these affections. The effort of the spectator to sympathise with the sentiments of the person principally concerned is the source of 'the amiable virtues' or 'virtues of humanity'; the effort of the person principally concerned to 'bring down his emotions to what the spectator can go along with,' is the source of 'the great, the awful and respectable, the virtues of self-denial, of self-government.' 'Hence it is that to feel much for others and little for ourselves, that to restrain our selfish, and to indulge our benevolent affections, constitutes the perfection of human nature.'[1] While the sense of propriety is the result of a simple and direct sympathy with the affections or motives of others, the sense of merit and demerit is the result of a compound sympathy, direct and indirect: in the one case, a direct sympathy with the sentiments of the agent and an indirect sympathy with the gratitude of those affected by his action; in the other, a direct antipathy to the sentiments of the agent and an indirect sympathy with the resentment of those who suffer from his action.

As we judge of the propriety and merit of the actions of others by putting ourselves in their place and looking at their motives and actions with their own eyes or from their own point of view, by sympathetically identifying ourselves with the agent and with those affected by his actions, so we judge the propriety and merit of our own actions, and of the affections of which they are the expression, by looking at them with the eyes of others, by seeing them with the eyes of the spectator, and sharing

[1] *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp. 43, 44.

his sentiments concerning them. To correct the partiality of our own judgment it is necessary, however, that we look at our own actions with the eyes not of the actual spectator, who is always more or less partial and more or less ill-informed, but with the eyes of the fully-informed and completely impartial spectator. It is only by thus distinguishing between the actual and the ideal spectator, or 'the outward man' and 'the man within the breast,' that we can distinguish between mere praise and praiseworthiness. When we have realised this distinction, 'we are pleased to think that we have rendered ourselves the natural objects of approbation, though no approbation should ever actually be bestowed upon us; and we are mortified to reflect that we have justly incurred the blame of those we live with, though that sentiment should never actually be exerted against us.'[1] The judgments of actual public opinion require to be thus corrected by reference to the judgment of the ideal public or the ideal spectator. For though society is the mirror in which we first discover the propriety and merit, or impropriety and demerit of our own actions, 'unfortunately this moral looking-glass is not always a very good one.' In general, Smith seems to hold, conformity to duty will mean conformity to the 'general rules' which result from the perception of the particular proprieties, in so far as such general rules are sufficiently definite for guidance. But it is only the rules of justice that are really adequate. 'The rules of justice may be compared to the rules of grammar; the rules of the other virtues, to the rules which critics lay down for the attainment of what is sublime and elegant in composition. The one are precise, accurate, and indispensable. The other are loose, vague, and indeterminate, and present us rather with a general idea of the perfection we ought to aim at, than afford us any certain and infallible directions for acquiring it.'[2]

This theory is primarily and in the main a psychological theory of the moral sentiments, rather than a

[1] *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 248. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 310.

solution of the proper problem of ethics, that of the criterion of moral value or of the basis of moral distinctions. It is the culmination of the psychological tendency which is characteristic of the 'moral sense' school of moralists; and the author's own consciousness of this limitation of the inquiry comes out in various ways. For example, as regards utility, the question which he discusses is not the relation of utility to propriety, but whether we are conscious of the utility or of the propriety; not whether the true aim of punishment is the preservation of society, but whether this, or resentment, is the actual motive of punishment. He is not attempting to account for, or to explain, the moral element in our moral sentiments by reducing it to sympathy. Hence the irrelevancy of the objection of Thomas Brown, repeated by others, that 'the feelings with which we sympathise are themselves moral feelings or sentiments; or if they are not moral feelings, the reflection of them from a thousand breasts cannot alter their nature';[1] and that 'in either case it is equally evident, that sympathy cannot be the source of any additional knowledge,'[2] since the echo of our own feelings in those of others can only repeat the original feeling,—the 'moral mirror' can only reflect the original moral judgment of the individual. Smith himself does not hesitate to speak of 'natural propriety,' of 'our moral faculties, our natural sense of merit and propriety.'[3] What he is concerned to show is simply the part which sympathy plays in the moral consciousness of the individual, the essentially social nature of the individual conscience; that without society we could not attain moral insight, not that moral insight is possible without moral faculties, or even a 'moral sense.'

The only direct ethical significance of the theory is, therefore, the essentially social nature of morality, the inference that 'man, who can subsist only in society, was fitted by nature to that situation for which he was made,'[4] that in sympathy is found the real security for

[1] *Philosophy of the Human Mind*, lect. 80.
[2] *Ibid.*, lect. 81.
[3] *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 266.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

the stability of 'the great, the immense fabric of human society, that fabric which to raise and to support seems in this world, if I may say so, to have been the peculiar and darling care of nature.'[1] In the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, as in the *Wealth of Nations*, he recognises another bond, of great strength and value, in the economic interests of the individual. 'Tho' among the different members of the society there should be no mutual love and affection, the society, tho' less happy and agreeable, will not necessarily be dissolved. Society may subsist among different men, as among different merchants, from a sense of its utility, without any mutual love or affection; and tho' no man in it should owe any obligation, or be bound in gratitude to any other, it may still be upheld by a mercenary exchange of good offices according to an agreed valuation.'[2] This prudential motive, however, is here assigned its true ethical place, in subordination to the sympathetic appreciation of the social value of our conduct. The ethical function of sympathy is to substitute for the partiality of the agent's self-love the impartiality of the spectator, that is, of society, actual or ideal. The moral validity of our motives depends, as Kant would say, upon the possibility of universalising them—upon their approval, not by the agent, but by the impartial spectator.

It is not to be denied, however, that Smith at times forgets the limitations of his inquiry, as above described, and indulges in general ethical observations which have no real relation to it. Sidgwick has justly noted the 'inferiority' of his work 'when he passes from psychological analysis to ethical construction.'[3] This is seen, for example, in his hasty identification of the 'general rules' of conduct with the 'laws of God,' and in his easy-going theological optimism. 'It is impossible,' says Leslie Stephen, 'to resist the impression, whilst we read his fluent rhetoric, and observe his easy acceptance of theological principles already exposed by his master

[1] *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 190. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 189.
[3] *History of Ethics*, p. 223.

Hume, that we are not listening to a thinker really grappling with a difficult problem, so much as to an ambitious professor who has found an excellent opportunity for displaying his command of language, and making brilliant lectures. The whole tone savours of that complacent optimism of the time which retained theological phrases to round a paragraph, and to save the trouble of genuine thought.'[1] But it is necessary to remember that these discussions are really subsidiary to the main argument; and it shows a singular lack of discernment to say that 'Smith's main proposition was hardly original, though he has worked it out in detail, and it is rather calculated to lead us dexterously round difficult questions than to supply us with a genuine answer.'[2]

Smith's 'command of language' must strike every reader of this work, as well as of the *Wealth of Nations*. His style, though perhaps a trifle too fluent, is very nearly up to the highest level of English philosophy, and it has been justly remarked that 'the charm of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* lies not so much in its principal thesis, as in its incidental discussions and illustrations. In these the absent-minded scholar shows a wide and subtle knowledge of human nature, and never was a moralist more free from platitudes.'[3] One of these illustrations may be quoted to show the quality of Smith's style at its best, the passage in which he explains how it is that 'youth, the season of gaiety, so easily engages our affections.' 'That propensity to joy which seems even to animate the bloom, and to sparkle from the eyes of youth and beauty, tho' in a person of the same sex, exalts even the aged to a more joyous mood than ordinary. They forget, for a time, their infirmities, and abandon themselves to those agreeable ideas and emotions to which they have long been strangers, but which, when the presence of so much happiness recalls them to their breast, take their place there, like old acquaintance, from whom they are

[1] *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 77. [2] *Loc. cit.*
[3] H. Laurie, *Scottish Philosophy*, p. 122.

sorry to have ever been parted, and whom they embrace more heartily upon account of this long separation.'[1]

3. *The Early Utilitarians: Tucker and Paley*

The ethical inadequacy of the psychological or 'moral sense' theory, even when developed by the aid of the principles of Association and Sympathy, invited a more deliberate and explicit effort to solve the problem of the criterion of moral distinctions, such as we find in the early Utilitarians, Tucker and Paley. These moralists attach themselves, not, as might have been expected, to Hume and his doctrine of natural altruism, but to Gay, whose doctrine—that the general happiness is the criterion, while one's own happiness is the motive, of virtuous action, and that the obligation to right conduct is to be found in the sanctions of reward and punishment, or in its consequences to the individual himself—they set themselves to elaborate. So far as the merit of originality can be claimed for this development of the ideas so briefly sketched by Gay, it is to Tucker, not to Paley, that such merit belongs. In his *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* Paley merely reduces to more succinct and systematic form the views developed at wearisome length and without due regard to system by Tucker, to whom he frankly acknowledges his indebtedness. 'I have found in this writer,' he says, 'more original thinking and observation upon the several subjects that he has taken in hand, than in any other, not to say, in all others put together. . . . But his thoughts are diffused through a long, various, and irregular work. I shall account it no mean praise, if I have been sometimes able to dispose into method, to collect into heads and articles, or to exhibit in more compact and tangible masses, what, in that otherwise excellent performance, is spread over too much surface.'[2] Tucker himself makes no reference to his obligations either to Gay or to Hartley, but is profuse in his expressions of allegiance and indebtedness to

[1] *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 89. [2] *Principles*, Preface.

Locke, whose 'experimental method' he professes to apply to moral questions. 'Whatever I may be able to do, I stand indebted to Mr. Locke for, having learned from him which way to direct my observation, and how to make use of what I observe.'[1] He sets himself to show that 'we derive our inclinations and moral senses through the same channel as our knowledge, without having them interwoven originally into our constitution,'[2] and in the doctrine of the 'moral sense' he sees the ethical version of the doctrine of 'innate ideas' which Locke had so successfully exploded in its intellectual applications. Like Hartley, he seeks to account for the 'moral sense' by the principle of Association, which he calls 'Translation.'

Tucker is equally convinced that the 'ultimate good' is the general happiness, and that the only motive which can ultimately actuate the individual is regard to his own happiness. 'The fundamental article I have aimed at establishing is that of universal charity, unreserved benevolence or public spirit, not confined to our own country alone, but extended to every member of the universe, whereof we all are citizens.'[3] 'The grand fundamental rule of conduct,' he holds, is that of 'labouring constantly to increase the common stock [of good or happiness] by any beneficial service or prevention of damage among our fellow-creatures wherever we can, preferring always the greater discoverable good and good of the greater number, before the less.'[4] On the other hand he tells us, 'I have examined human nature and found that Satisfaction, every man's own satisfaction, is the spring that actuates all his motions.'[5] To prove the obligatoriness of virtuous or altruistic conduct, it is necessary, therefore, to show the complete coincidence of such conduct with that dictated by true or enlightened self-interest.

As to the general coincidence of prudential and virtuous or benevolent conduct, Tucker has no doubts; and the

[1] *Light of Nature Pursued*, Introd. [2] *Ibid.*, i. 151 (3rd ed.).
[3] *Ibid.*, ii. 677. [4] *Ibid.*, ii. 670. [5] *Ibid.*, i. 614.

solution of the psychological difficulty of reconciling disinterested or genuine benevolence with self-interest or that regard for our own satisfaction, or pleasure on the whole, which he takes to be the dominating motive of all human action, is found by him in the principle of 'Translation' or Association. Through it he is able to explain how the means acquire for us the importance of the end, how virtue thus becomes an end in itself and 'general rules' of conduct take the place of the 'ultimate good,' which is for the individual always his own happiness. Yet the coincidence remains incomplete: the highest acts of virtue, where the self-sacrifice seems absolute, have not been reduced to terms of prudence. 'We have found no reason to imagine a wise man would ever die for his country or suffer martyrdom in the cause of virtue, how strong propensity soever he might feel in himself to maintain her interests. For he would never act upon impulse nor do anything without knowing why: he would cultivate a disposition to justice, benevolence, and public spirit, because he would see it must lead him into actions most conducive to his happiness, and would place such confidence in his rules as to presume they carried that tendency in particular instances wherein it did not immediately appear. But it is one thing not to see directly that measures have such a tendency, and another to discern clearly that they have a contrary; and when they take away all capacity of further enjoyment, this is so manifest a proof of their inexpedience as no presumption whatever can withstand. Therefore he will never let his love of virtue grow to such an extravagant fondness as to overthrow the very purposes for which he entertained it.'[1]

Tucker thus finds himself forced, for the complete solution of the ethical problem, beyond the field of ethics into that of metaphysics or theology. So far, he has proceeded 'solely upon the view of human nature, with-

[1] *Light of Nature Pursued*, i. 272.

out any consideration of Religion or another world,' and in the very incompleteness of the solution reached from the former point of view he finds the proof of the necessity of the latter. From the benevolence and equity of God it follows that 'the accounts of all are to be set even,' or that the shares of all in that happiness which is the ultimate good shall be made equal in the long run. The loss or sacrifice of happiness which virtue seems to call for on the part of the individual can therefore be only apparent or temporary, as the gain of wrong-doing also is. In the 'Bank of the universe,' whose transactions are much more exact and secure than those of the Bank of England, 'all the good a man does, stands placed to his account, to be repaid him in full value when it will be most useful to him: so that whoever works for another, works for himself; and by working for numbers, earns more than he could possibly do by working for himself alone . . . like a thrifty merchant, who scruples not to advance considerable sums, and even to exhaust his coffers, for gaining a large profit to the common stock in partnership.'[1] This idea of a partnership of mankind in a common stock of happiness, by any addition to which gain must accrue, in the future if not in the present life, to the individual who makes it, is Tucker's grand solution of the apparent contradiction between virtue and self-interest. The conviction that, as Butler puts it, a man will 'find his account' in virtue, though not the conscious motive of all virtuous actions, yet seems to Tucker the only possible justification of virtue to the reflective mind.

'It is exclusively as a psychologist and as a moralist,' says Leslie Stephen, 'that Tucker has any great speculative merit';[2] and, like the other moralists of his age, with the exception of Butler and Hume, it is in psychology rather than in ethics that he excels. To use his own figure, he is an adept in the use of 'the microscope' of psychological analysis, but only a tyro in that

[1] *Light of Nature Pursued*, i. 666.
[2] *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 112.

of 'the telescope' of metaphysical and theological speculation. In the latter sphere we feel, with Stephen, that he is 'a solitary and half-trained thinker.'[1] His appeal is from masters of speculation like Berkeley to 'the first man you meet in the street'; he is too solicitous to prove the orthodoxy of his views, too 'desirous,' in his own words, 'of keeping upon good terms with everybody.'[2] Yet his sincerity is not to be denied; the reader cannot but assent to his claim that his enquiry has been a real one to himself. 'My thoughts,' he tells us, 'have taken a turn from my earliest youth towards searching into the foundations and measures of right and wrong; my love for retirement has furnished me with continual leisure, and the exercise of my reason has been my daily employment.'[3] Throughout the work we are conscious of the practical interest which inspires the entire undertaking, and of the transparent simplicity of the author's nature.

Tucker's qualities as a writer are remarkable. His talent for illustration is, as Paley says, unrivalled; 'his illustrations, quaint as they may be, have frequently the merit of an almost incomparable felicity.'[4] He tells us that he had 'a desire of enlivening abstruse matters, and rendering them visible by familiar images,' and in the number, the appositeness, and the quaintness of these 'familiar images' he reminds us more of the ancient Greek philosophers than of his own compatriots. As in the case of Socrates and Plato, too, his humour is irrepressible; he is 'an example of that rarest of all intellectual compounds, the metaphysical humourist.'[5] He is always master of an easy and graceful, if unambitious style. Yet his faults as a writer are not less obvious than his virtues, the faults of lack of system, of almost unparalleled diffuseness and irrelevancy. His

[1] *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 120.
[2] *Light of Nature Pursued*, ii. 681.
[3] *Life*, prefixed to *Light of Nature Pursued*.
[4] Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 110.
[5] Stephen, *op. cit.*, ii. 110.

book is, as he himself acknowledges, more like 'a tissue of separate essays' than an organic whole: 'in this my investigation of that wilderness, the human mind . . . I have no preconcerted plan . . . and though not without some general idea of the end to which my inquiries will lead me, yet have I not a full prospect of the track they will take.' He is not really writing for the reader so much as for himself; 'I am not to be considered as a professor instructing others in the science he is completely master of, but as a learner seeking after an improvement of my own knowledge.'[1] He will leave nothing unsaid; as Stephen remarks, 'he utterly ignores the principle that the secret of being tedious is to say everything.'[2] His lack of instinct for system leads him into endless irrelevancies, and although these irrelevancies are frequently delightful, in their cumulative effect they add greatly to the weariness of the already much-tried reader. It was in these defects of Tucker's exposition, otherwise so admirable, that Paley saw his opportunity.

Paley's reputation in the fields of natural theology and Christian apologetics is at least equal to his importance as a moralist, and he himself regarded his works in these different fields as constituting a system, consisting of 'the evidences of Natural Religion, the evidences of Revealed Religion, and an account of the duties that result from both.'[3] His experience as a Cambridge tutor doubtless stimulated and educated his natural gifts as a clear and convincing writer on such subjects; he always writes as 'a professor instructing others,' and his books were at once adopted as text-books in the universities and long held their place among the recognised fountains of knowledge in these subjects. Of their style it is hardly an exaggeration to say, with Mackintosh, that if inevitably didactic and without any special grace, it is 'as near perfection in its kind as any in our language.'

[1] *Light of Nature Pursued*, i. 143–4.
[2] *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 111.
[3] *Natural Theology*, Dedication.

Alike in his natural theology and in his ethics Paley represents, as Stephen says, 'the commonplace English mind,'[1] and, it may be added, the commonplace eighteenth-century mind. His conception of the relation of God to the world is that which is common to the orthodox writers and their deistic opponents, that of an external and mechanical 'First Cause'; and his one contribution to the argument is contained in his famous argument from the evidences of design in the phenomena of nature, and especially of the animal organism, to a divine Designer or Contriver. This single idea is illustrated at great length, especially from the case of the human organism; and the opposing alternatives of impersonal law or order and of the development of organs adapted by 'use' to the demands of the external conditions of their life are controverted with great vigour and no little acuteness and argumentative skill. The impression left upon the mind of the reader is rather that of a clever and 'lawyer-like' mind, as Mackintosh says, than that of any real or original metaphysical insight. In any case the entire argument rests, like that of Butler in the *Analogy*, upon presuppositions, readily accepted in the writer's own age, which the progress of scientific as well as of metaphysical thought has rendered no longer tenable. It belongs to the pre-evolutionary epoch.

The *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* is a work of more permanent interest and value. Though its main ideas are confessedly derived from Tucker, they are developed and applied by Paley to 'the situations which arise in the life of an inhabitant of this country in these times,'[2] and to the solution of many casuistical difficulties with a skill, sagacity, and knowledge of life which give them a new value and significance. Like his master, Tucker, he is unusually successful in avoiding the commonplace and in resisting the temptation to write for edification. The key-note of the work is to be found in a sentence of Dr. Johnson's, quoted in the Preface, 'When

[1] *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, i. 409.
[2] *Principles*, Preface.

the obligations of morality are taught, let the sanctions of Christianity never be forgotten.' Paley's aim is to develop the system of ethics from the Christian standpoint; but he holds that what is peculiar to Christianity is not the substance of Christian morality, but the sanctions by which that morality is enforced, the new motive which is invoked. The principle of morality, he agrees with Tucker, is Utility: Virtue is 'the doing good to mankind.' Christian virtue is 'the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness'[1] The motive is, as with Tucker, self-interest, but the larger self-interest which is appealed to by the Christian idea of God as, in His benevolence, willing the happiness of His creatures. Virtue thus implies obligation; and 'a man is said to be obliged when he is urged by a violent motive resulting from the command of another.'[2] There is no obligation except from the command of a superior, who offers a sufficient inducement for our obedience. 'And from this account of obligation it follows, that we can be obliged to nothing, but what we ourselves are to gain or lose something by; for nothing else can be a "violent motive" to us. As we should not be obliged to obey the laws, or the magistrate, unless rewards or punishments, pleasure or pain, somehow or other, depended upon our obedience; so neither should we, without the same reason, be obliged to do what is right, to practise virtue, or to obey the commands of God.'[3] In proof of these divine sanctions of virtue and vice he appeals alike to Scripture and, as in the *Natural Theology*, to the evidences of benevolent design in the works of God as revealed in nature. Since the design of God is the general happiness, we may infer the congruity or incongruity of our actions with His will, their virtuous or vicious character, by considering their consequences, in pleasure or pain, for mankind; and it is to this secondary or utilitarian criterion, rather than to the ultimate rule of the will of God, that Paley generally

[1] *Principles*, bk. i. ch. vii.
[2] *Ibid.*, bk. ii. ch. ii.
[3] *Loc. cit.*

refers. That the general happiness is the content of the divine will, makes action which is conducive to that happiness, rather than to our own, obligatory upon us, ensuring as it does the ultimate coincidence of virtue and self-interest. The only difference between an act of prudence and an act of duty is 'that, in the one case, we consider what we shall gain or lose in the present world; in the other case, we consider also what we shall gain or lose in the world to come.'[1]

The emphasis, throughout the work, is, however, rather upon the substance than upon the sanctions of virtue. Paley's effort is to develop the ethics of Utility, to trace in detail the kind of conduct which is prescribed by regard to the general happiness; and the ultimate motive of self-interest really drops out of sight. Having once for all proved to his own satisfaction the obligatoriness of virtue,[2] he devotes himself to the detailed delineation of virtue. While he consistently denies any qualitative distinction between pleasures, his interpretation of virtue in terms of utility is saved from the consequences which, in less careful hands, might have seemed to follow from such a view. He sharply differentiates the true from the false idea of happiness. It does not consist in the pleasures of the senses, but in 'the exercise of the social affections,' in 'the exercise of our faculties, either of body or mind, in the pursuit of some engaging end,' in 'the formation of good habits and in health of body and of mind.'[3] He distinguishes between the particular and the general consequences or utility of the action, and deduces from this distinction the necessity of 'general rules' which must be obeyed unquestioningly, for the most part, without any calculation of the results in the particular case. It is by reference to this principle that he solves the various questions of casuistry which arise in the life

[1] *Principles*, bk. ii. ch. iii.

[2] 'This solution goes to the bottom of the subject, as no farther question can reasonably be asked: therefore, private happiness is our motive, and the will of God our rule.'—*Ibid.*, bk. ii. ch. iii.

[3] *Ibid.*, bk. i. ch. vi.

of duty, the general rule not being different in its origin from the rule of particular utility, but representing the larger utility, with which the narrower is always liable to conflict. Finally, he so fully recognises the utilitarian value of character, or of formed habits of virtuous action, and the practical necessity of allowing this all-important means to take the place of the end, as to approximate very closely to the acknowledgment of its intrinsic and ultimate value. This is especially true of the doctrine of probation, in the *Natural Theology*, which is practically identical with that of Butler, in the *Analogy*. Of the purpose or design 'for which the state in which we are placed is fitted, and which it is made to serve,' he says 'the most probable supposition' is 'that it is a state of moral probation, and that many things in it suit with this hypothesis, which suit no other. It is not a state of unmixed happiness, or of happiness simply; it is not a state of designed misery, or of misery simply; it is not a state of retribution; it is not a state of punishment. It suits with none of these suppositions. It accords much better with the idea of its being a condition calculated for the production, exercise, and improvement of moral qualities, with a view to a future state, in which these qualities, after being so produced, exercised, and improved, may, by a new and more favouring constitution of things, receive their reward, or become their own.' 'Virtue perhaps is the greatest of all ends.'[1]

[1] *Nat. Theol.*, ch. xxvi.

CHAPTER IV

THE REVIVAL OF RATIONALISM: PRICE AND REID

Though Reid, as the founder of the Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense, as well as in virtue of the larger scale of his philosophical work, is decidedly the more important thinker, yet Price has an importance of his own, as the earlier writer, and on account of the remarkable way in which, in the ethical field, he anticipates some of the leading positions of Kant. The originality of the *Review of the Principal Questions in Morals*, published in 1757, is considerably diminished by the extent to which Price is indebted to Cudworth and Clarke, on the one hand, and to Butler, on the other. The latter 'incomparable writer' is the special object of Price's admiration, and he accepts, so far as they go, Butler's views of conscience, self-love, and benevolence, agreeing with him especially in his antagonism to Hutcheson's doctrines of the 'moral sense' and of benevolence as the whole of virtue, against which his own work is one sustained polemic. His chief aim is to show, as against Hume's development of the doctrine of the 'moral sense,' the absolute and immutable nature of moral distinctions. The original source of Hume's empiricism and scepticism, in the intellectual as well as in the ethical sphere, he finds in Locke's initial error of deriving all 'simple ideas' from sensation and reflection. The understanding, he holds, gives us not merely knowledge, but also new 'simple ideas.' Locke's denial of this is the result of his confusion of understanding with imagination. 'It is a capital error, into which those persons run who confound the understanding with the imagination

and deny reality and possibility to everything the latter cannot conceive, however clear and certain to the former. The powers of the imagination are very narrow ; and were the understanding confined to the same limits, nothing could be known, and the very faculty itself would be annihilated. Nothing is plainer than that one of these often perceives where the other is blind ; is surrounded with light where the other finds all darkness ; and, in numberless instances, knows things to exist of which the other can frame no idea.'[1] While sense and imagination have to do only with particulars, the understanding has to do with universals. Understanding, as a source of self-evident ideas, must also be distinguished from reasoning, or the investigation of relations between objects, ideas of which we already possess. If any one denies the self-evidence of such original ideas of the understanding, we can only 'refer him to common sense. If he cannot find there the perception I have mentioned, he is not farther to be argued with, for the subject will not admit of argument ; there being nothing clearer than the point itself disputed to be brought to confirm it.'[2]

Among the self-evident ideas apprehended by the understanding are those of right and wrong. The ultimate moral distinctions belong to the nature of things, the immutable order of the universe, and are no more capable of proof than ultimate intellectual relations. 'There are, undoubtedly, some actions that are *ultimately* approved, and for justifying which no reason can be assigned ; as there are some ends, which are ultimately desired, and for choosing which no reason can be given. Were not this true, there would be an infinite progression of reasons and ends, and therefore nothing could be at all approved or desired.'[3] The obligation of such actions rests upon their intrinsic nature ; they are obligatory upon a rational being, apart altogether from reward or punishment. A rational being, as such, ought to act not from instinct, passion, or appetite, not even from self-love

[1] *Review*, ch. i. sect. 2.
[2] *Loc. cit.*
[3] *Ibid.*, ch. i. sect. 3.

or benevolence, but from purely rational considerations. It is only 'our deficiencies and weaknesses' that give occasion to actions of the former kind; 'reason alone, did we possess it in a higher degree, would answer all the ends of them.' For example, 'there would be no need of the parental affection, were all parents sufficiently acquainted with the reasons for taking upon them the guidance and support of those whom nature has placed under their care, and were they virtuous enough to be always determined by those reasons.'[1] 'The intellectual nature is its own law. It has, within itself, a spring and guide of action which it cannot suppress or reject. Rectitude is itself an end, an ultimate end, an end superior to all other ends, governing, directing, and limiting them, and whose existence and influence depend on nothing arbitrary. It presides over all. Every appetite and faculty, every instinct and will, and all nature are subjected to it. To act from affection to it, is to act with light, and conviction, and knowledge. But acting from instinct is so far acting in the dark, and following a blind guide. Instinct *drives* and *precipitates*; but reason *commands*.'[2]

It follows, for Price as for Kant, that 'an agent cannot be justly denominated *virtuous*, except he acts from a consciousness of rectitude, and with a regard to it as his *rule* and *end*'; that 'the virtue of an agent is always *less* in proportion to the degree in which natural temper and propensities fall in with his actions, instinctive principles operate, and rational reflexion on what is right to be done, is wanting.'[3] Yet he also appeals, in the spirit of his age, to considerations of self-interest. Speaking of the probability, or even bare possibility, of an eternal reward of virtue, he expresses surprise that men 'should so little care to put themselves in the way to win *this Prize*, and to become adventurers here, where even to fail would be glorious'; that they should forget 'that by such a course as virtue and piety require, we can in general lose *nothing*, but *may* gain

[1] *Review*, ch. iii. [2] *Ibid.*, ch. viii. [3] *Loc cit.*

infinitely; and that, on the contrary, by a careless ill-spent life we can *get nothing*, or at best (happen what will) *next to nothing*, but may *lose infinitely*.'[1] Even in the present life virtue is, in a real sense, its own reward; genuine virtue and happiness are inseparable, and the delight which a man takes in virtuous action is a sure criterion of the reality of his virtue. 'What our hearts are most set upon will make the principal part of our happiness. . . . Well therefore may he suspect his character, who finds that virtuous exercises, the duties of piety, and the various offices of love and goodness to which he may be called, are distasteful and irksome to him. Virtue is the object of the chief complacency of every virtuous man; the exercise of it is his chief delight; and the consciousness of it gives him his highest joy.'[2]

Thomas Reid is the founder of the Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense. His appeal to 'Common Sense' constitutes a new departure in English philosophy: it is his answer to Hume, his method of vindicating the rationality of Belief from Hume's sceptical attack. His essential thesis is that the scepticism of Hume is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the 'doctrine of ideas' which is common to Locke and Descartes. While accepting the experiential and psychological method of Locke, he dissents from this Cartesian or 'ideal theory,' which limits our knowledge to ideas and their relations. In this theory he finds the initial and fatal error which leads to the scepticism of Hume. It was Hume who woke Reid, like Kant, from his dogmatic slumber, who first compelled him to question the philosophical tradition in which he had grown up. 'I shall always avow myself your disciple in metaphysics,' he writes to the great sceptic; 'I have learned more from your writings in this kind than from all others put together. Your system appears to me not only coherent in all its parts, but likewise justly deduced from principles commonly received among philosophers; principles

[1] *Review*, Conclusion. [2] *Ibid.*, ch. ix.

which I never thought of calling in question until the conclusions you drew from them in the "Treatise of Human Nature" made me suspect them.'[1]

The inevitableness of the sceptical development of the ideal theory is rapidly sketched by Reid in the following characteristic passage. 'Ideas seem to have something in their nature unfriendly to other existences. They were first introduced into philosophy in the humble character of images or representatives of things; and in this character they seemed not only to be inoffensive, but to serve admirably well for explaining the operations of the human understanding. But, since men began to reason clearly and distinctly about them, they have by degrees supplanted their constituents, and undermined the existence of everything but themselves. First, they discarded all secondary qualities of bodies; and it was found out by their means that fire is not hot, nor snow cold, nor honey sweet; and, in a word, that heat and cold, sound, colour, taste, and smell, are nothing but ideas or impressions. Bishop Berkeley advanced them a step higher, and found out, by just reasoning from the same principles, that extension, solidity, space, figure and body, are ideas, and that there is nothing in nature but ideas and spirits. But the triumph of ideas was completed by the "Treatise on Human Nature," which discards spirits also, and leaves ideas and impressions as the sole existences in the universe. . . . These ideas are as free and independent as the birds of the air, or as Epicurus's atoms when they pursue their journey in the vast inane. . . . They make the whole furniture of the universe; starting into existence, or out of it, without any cause; combining into parcels, which the vulgar call *minds;* and succeeding one another by fixed laws, without time, place, or author of those laws.'[2]

The initial error of Locke was, according to Reid, his postulating 'simple ideas' or 'simple apprehension' as the elementary datum or material of knowledge. Hume's

[1] Hill Burton, *Life of Hume*, ii. 155.

[2] Works, i. 109.

sceptical disintegration of knowledge into unrelated sensations is the inevitable result of such a start. 'Simple apprehension, though it be the simplest, is not the first operation of the understanding; and, instead of saying that the more complex operations of the mind are formed by compounding simple apprehensions, we ought rather to say, that simple apprehensions are got by analysing more complex operations.'[1] The elementary feature of knowledge is judgment or belief. We do not first have the several ideas, and then proceed to compare and relate them; every idea 'suggests' its relation at once to a subject and to an object. The mere isolated sensation is the product of abstraction; in actual perception the sensation always 'suggests,' or carries with it the belief in a corresponding quality as belonging to the object. In the case of the secondary qualities, all that is suggested is *some* quality, quite unlike the sensation; in the case of the primary qualities, we know the quality, though it is still unlike the sensation.[2]

These original and fundamental judgments Reid calls 'judgments of nature' or 'natural suggestions,' as distinguished from judgments and suggestions which are the result of experience, on the one hand, or of reasoning, on the other: they belong to 'our constitution,' and are the presupposition of all other knowledge. The attempt to prove them is, therefore, foredoomed to failure. They are the 'first principles' upon which all reasoning rests. Of them 'we can give no other account but that they necessarily result from the constitution of our faculties';[3] they are 'not grounded upon any antecedent reasoning, but upon the constitution of the mind itself.'[4] They belong to the 'Common Sense and Reason' of mankind. 'The power of judging in self-evident propositions . . . is purely natural, and therefore common to the learned and the unlearned, to the trained and the untrained. It requires only ripeness of understanding, and freedom from prejudice, but nothing else.'[5] 'In such controversies,

[1] Works, i. 376. [2] Works, i. 313 ff. [3] Works, i. 455.
[4] Works, i. 452. [5] Works, i. 434.

every man is a competent judge. . . . To judge of first principles, requires no more than a sound mind free from prejudice, and a distinct conception of the question. The learned and the unlearned, the philosopher and the day-labourer, are upon a level, and will pass the same judgment, when they are not misled by some bias, or taught to renounce their understanding from some mistaken religious principle. In matters beyond the reach of common understanding, the many are led by the few, and willingly yield to their authority. But, in matters of common sense, the few must yield to the many, when local and temporary prejudices are removed.' [1]

Such statements as these have led to the criticism of the Philosophy of Common Sense as an appeal from the reasoned conclusions of philosophy to the vulgar prejudices and unthinking beliefs of the ordinary man. This criticism was first made by Priestley, in his *Examination of Reid's Inquiry, Beattie's Essay, and Oswald's Appeal to Common Sense*, published in 1774, and was repeated in a well-known passage in Kant's *Prolegomena*. Instead of solving Hume's problem in the sense in which he had stated it, the Scottish philosophers have, Kant holds, missed the point of Hume's scepticism. 'The always unfavourable fate of metaphysics willed that he should be understood by no one. It cannot be without feeling a certain regret that one sees how completely his opponents, Reid, Oswald, Beattie, and, lastly, Priestley, missed the point of his problem, in taking that for granted which was precisely what he doubted, and on the other hand in proving with warmth, and in most cases great immodesty, what it had never entered his head to question. . . . It was not the question whether the conception of Cause was correct and useful, and in view of the whole knowledge of Nature, indispensable, for upon this Hume had never cast a doubt. . . . The question was as to the origin of the idea, not as to its practical necessity in use. . . . The opponents of this celebrated man, to have done the problem full justice,

[1] Works, i. 438.

must have penetrated deeply into the nature of the Reason, in so far as it is occupied solely with pure thought, a thing which was inconvenient for them. They invented therefore a more convenient means, by which, without any insight, they might defy him, namely, the appeal to the *common sense* of mankind. It is indeed a great natural gift to possess, straightforward (or, as it has been called, plain) common sense. But it must be proved by deeds, by the thoughtfulness and rationality of what one thinks and says, and not by appealing to it as an oracle, when one has nothing wise to adduce in one's justification. When insight and science are at a low ebb, then and not before to appeal to common sense is one of the subtle inventions of modern times, by which the emptiest talker may coolly confront the profoundest thinker and hold out against him. But so long as there is a small remnant of insight left, one will be cautious of clutching at this straw. And seen in its true light, the argument is nothing better than an appeal to the verdict of the multitude; a clamour before which the philosopher blushes, and the popular witling scornfully triumphs. But I should think that Hume can make as good claim to the possession of common sense as Beattie, and in addition, to something the latter certainly did not possess, namely, a critical Reason, to hold common sense within bounds in order not to let it overreach itself in speculations. . . . Chisel and hammer are quite sufficient to shape a piece of deal, but for copper-engraving an etching-needle is necessary.'[1]

The fact that Kant couples the philosophy of Reid with that of Oswald and Beattie, and includes all three in a common condemnation with their critic, Priestley, suggests that his knowledge of the Scottish Philosophy was derived from Beattie's work, if not from Priestley's criticism, and amounts to a serious injustice to the founder of the school. Neither Beattie, whom Sidgwick well describes as 'a man of real, but chiefly literary ability, a

[1] *Prolegomena*, Introd., Belfort Bax's trans., pp. 4–6.

poet by choice and a philosopher from a sense of duty,' nor Oswald, whom the same writer calls 'a theological pamphleteer,' is to be compared with Reid in philosophical power; and neither discriminates, as he does, between the popular and the philosophical meaning of the term Common Sense. 'There are ways of reasoning, with regard to first principles,' he says, 'by which those that are truly such may be distinguished from vulgar errors or prejudices.'[1] Such principles can be proved indirectly, if not directly, by showing the absurd and self-contradictory consequences to which their denial leads. Their evidence is found in 'what is common in the structure of all languages,' which represent the common and natural judgments of mankind. His appeal is not to 'the first man you meet,' but to the ideal man; the common basis of truth can be reached, he holds, only by the process of critical reflection. His 'first principles' are the presuppositions of all reasoning, and the insight into their originality and ultimateness, as such, is itself the result of persistent philosophical reflection. 'To judge of first principles, requires no more than a sound mind free from prejudice, and a distinct conception of the question'; but it implies these rare qualifications. 'It requires only ripeness of understanding, and freedom from prejudice, but nothing else.' And when we follow Reid's argument in refutation of the scepticism of Hume, as it has been sketched above, we find that it consists in a philosophical demonstration of the connexion between Hume's conclusions and the premises, common to his reasoning and that of Locke and Berkeley, not to speak of Descartes and still earlier philosophers, the sceptical result being taken to imply the unsatisfactory character of the premises from which it is the logical conclusion. In short, we find Reid, like Kant, endeavouring to escape Hume's conclusion by rejecting Hume's premises which, in the eyes of both philosophers, seem to have disproved themselves by the unthinkableness of their consequences.

[1] Works, i. 441.

It must be admitted, however, that there is another Reid who is fitly coupled with Beattie and Oswald, as the deeper Reid whose method we have described is coupled with the names of Adam Ferguson and Dugald Stewart, who did little else than express in better literary form the thoughts of their more original predecessor. There is the Reid who does not hesitate to make play for the uninitiated with the results of the 'theory of ideas'; who asserts against Hume the necessity of that practical belief of which Hume himself had proclaimed the inevitableness; who betrays fatal inability to understand the significance of the Berkeleyan idealism, or to distinguish the speculative from the practical aspect of philosophical questions. Even at his best, he is apt to attribute a doctrine of Representationism to philosophers in whose theories there is no such tendency whatever, to confuse the psychological with the philosophical question, and to relapse into that very doctrine of Representationism against which he so earnestly contends. It is, therefore, greatly to the credit of the French philosophers of the earlier half of the nineteenth century that they discovered the deeper elements in the Scottish Philosophy, as formulated by its founder—its true feeling for the ethical and practical interests, its enthusiastic acceptance of the experimental method, its preference of factual observation to abstract speculation and systematic completeness. In consequence of these characteristics the philosophy of the Scottish school became the official philosophy of France, and was taught in its colleges, from 1816 to 1870. In America, too, this philosophy acquired an equal influence, and it is to a Scottish president of an American university that we owe the most careful account of its detailed development.[1]

[1] J. M'Cosh, *The Scottish Philosophy* (1875).

PART III

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The philosophy of the nineteenth century in England is no longer 'English philosophy' in the strict sense in which the philosophy of the preceding centuries can be so described. The new influence of the great German idealists, and especially of Kant, from whose 'critical' philosophy these systems sprang, is now to be traced as a determining factor in the thought of English writers of all schools. This influence is partly negative, partly positive. The more characteristically English movements of thought whose earlier history we have traced are continued in the nineteenth century with a growing consciousness of their antagonism to the absolute idealism which German philosophers have developed out of the Kantian criticism and transcendentalism. Mill and Hamilton alike protest against the vagaries, as they regard them, of German idealism; while the idealistic tendency which we have seen to be no less persistent, though less prominent, in the English philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, receives a fresh impulse and a fresh illumination from the new idealism of Germany. But while this new influence of Continental thought is not to be denied or under-estimated, it must not be forgotten that the movement of English philosophy is still, as before, national and independent. Whether it sets itself in conscious and active opposition to the Kantian and Hegelian movement of thought, or enthusiastically proclaims the essential truth and significance of that movement, it is never content to be the mere

pupil. Even when it accepts the lesson of German idealism, it insists upon the necessity of a restatement of that lesson in its own terms, upon the assimilation of the foreign to the national type of philosophy. And if it must be admitted that the importance of English philosophy for European thought is not so great as in the earlier centuries, that the centre of interest has changed from England to Germany, it is to be remembered that it was the philosophy of Hume that first, according to his own well-known admission, awoke Kant from his dogmatic slumber, that the Kantian philosophy is a new departure necessitated by the issue in Hume's scepticism of that empiricism which was one of the characteristic elements in English philosophy.

A second new influence which is to be noted, especially in the development of English empiricism in the nineteenth century, is that of Natural Science. There is an earlier phase of the movement which is strictly a continuation of the empiricism and associationism of the eighteenth century, represented by the names of Bentham, the two Mills, and Bain. Its later phase, identified with the name of Spencer, is an elaborate effort to formulate a 'scientific' or evolutionary philosophy, alike in the metaphysical and in the ethical field. The agnosticism of Spencer and Huxley is also, in part, the result of an identification of the scientific with the philosophical view of the universe, or of the limitation of knowledge to the phenomenal standpoint of the natural sciences.

In the movement of English philosophy in the century three main streams of thought may be distinguished. First, there is the English development of Hume's empiricism into utilitarianism, associationism, and evolutionism, the chief names being Bentham, James Mill, J. S. Mill, Bain, and Spencer. Secondly, there is the development of the Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense by Hamilton into the doctrines of Natural Realism and Relativism; its issues in the dualism of faith and reason, as proclaimed by Hamilton and Mansel, and in the agnosticism of Spencer and Huxley; and the return to its charac-

teristic point of view in Calderwood, Martineau, and Fraser. Thirdly, there is the idealistic answer to Hume as formulated in the spiritual philosophy of Coleridge and Newman, in the absolute idealism of Ferrier, and in the Neo-Hegelian philosophy of the later decades of the century, associated with the names of Stirling, Caird, Green, and Bradley.

CHAPTER I

THE ENGLISH DEVELOPMENT OF HUME'S EMPIRICISM: UTILITARIANISM (WITH ASSOCIATIONISM) AND EVOLUTIONISM

1. *Utilitarianism and Associationism: Bentham, James Mill, J. S. Mill, Bain*

For the Utilitarians or Benthamites, as they were called after the founder of the school, philosophy was only a means to social and political reform. They were not so much a philosophical school as a political party, and are better described as 'philosophical radicals.' Their Utilitarianism was rather a political ideal than an ethical principle, while their common empiricism and associationism were still more subordinate to the practical purposes which united them in a common social effort. As we advance from Bentham to James Mill, and from the latter to J. S. Mill, we see the theoretical element in the Utilitarian creed becoming more prominent. Bentham's interest is purely practical; he preaches Utilitarianism as an ideal of social and political conduct. James Mill is the psychologist of the school. As Höffding says, 'his philosophical importance consists mainly in the fact that he attempted to supply the psychological basis which was lacking in Bentham's ethics,'[1] but he extends the application of the principle of Association to the whole field of human knowledge. J. S. Mill is the philosopher of the school: he alone attempts the 'proof' of the principle of utility, he alone

[1] *Hist. of Modern Phil.*, ii. 369 (Eng. trans.).

investigates the nature of evidence generally. But even J. S. Mill does not concern himself with the problem of the obligatoriness of the general happiness upon the individual, except in a psychological and practical sense. The claim of the general happiness upon the individual is assumed by all alike; their common problem is how to induce the individual to recognise this claim in his conduct—the problem of the motivation of right conduct or the 'sanctions' of duty.

The efforts of Bentham as a reformer embraced three different but closely connected spheres: the reform of the law, of methods of punishment, and of the English constitution itself. In all three spheres he was equally radical in his ideas, and in all three the results of his efforts were great and far-reaching. In the last he became the leader of an important, though small political group, who called themselves 'Utilitarians' or 'philosophical radicals,' and whose efforts were directed, not to any abstract or utopian ideal, but to specific reforms which fell within the field of practical politics. The great result of these efforts was the Reform Act of 1832, for the passing of which Bentham, chiefly through the personal influence of James Mill, is entitled to a large share of credit. Bentham's watchword was Utility, or 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number,' which he substituted for the battle-cry of the American and French Revolutionists, the 'rights of man,' which was being taken up in England at the time. Man has no 'natural rights,' he contends; for all his rights he is indebted to Law; and the criterion of the goodness of Law is the measure in which its observance contributes to the general happiness. In the principle of utility he finds the statement of the true ideal of democracy, the very antithesis of all interests narrower than that of the community as a whole, the condemnation of all 'sinister' private or class interests which militate against the public weal. Renouncing the abstract ideal of 'equality' as a natural right, he yet asserts the equal claim of every individual to happiness; his ideal is that of the most

equal distribution of happiness, 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number,' 'each to count for one and no one for more than one.' Nor is it permissible to limit our consideration to the members of our own community, of our own country; the complete expression of the principle of Utility is a humanitarianism which recognises the claim of every human being to equal consideration.

The standard, then, alike of public and private conduct is the general happiness, and the moral quality of any action is determined by its pleasant or painful consequences, so far as these enter into the intention of the agent. The motive, on the other hand, has nothing to do with the morality of the action, and is in all cases self-interest. Bentham, that is to say, agrees with Tucker and Paley in taking an altruistic view of the end or criterion, and an egoistic view of the motive, of virtuous conduct. His real interest is in making the appeal to the self-interest of the individual sufficiently strong to induce him to subordinate his own to the general happiness; in other words, in making the 'sanctions' of altruistic conduct adequate. Besides the legal, he recognises the popular, the social, and the religious sanctions; as it is the function of the legislator to make the former adequate, it is the function of a true education to see to the efficiency of the latter. The only addition made by Bentham to previous statements of hedonistic ethics is his insistence upon the necessity of an exact calculation of the consequences of our action as the only sufficient guide to right conduct, and his construction of a 'hedonistic calculus' for this end. We must take account, not only of the intensity and duration of each pleasure, but also of its certainty, propinquity, fecundity or fruitfulness in further pleasures, and its purity or barrenness in painful consequences. The entire calculation is, of course, in terms of quantity; the end is the production of the maximum of possible pleasure and the minimum of possible pain.

The chief importance of James Mill's *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* is psychological, but it is in

an ethical interest that the psychological investigation is undertaken. Bentham had been satisfied with a crude doctrine of psychological hedonism, which he rightly identified with egoism; and his reconciliation of psychological egoism with ethical altruism had been equally hasty and ill-considered. Mill's object is to show, by the employment of the principle of Association, the psychological possibility of altruistic or disinterested conduct on the part of the egoistic or pleasure-seeking individual. He does this by developing the doctrine of Association in two directions: first, by insisting upon the growth of 'inseparable associations' which transform what had at first been merely means into ends which are sought for their own sake or disinterestedly, and secondly, by interpreting the result of association after the analogy of a chemical product which is different from the sum of its elements, rather than as a mechanical combination of these elements. This analysis of what had seemed to be simple and ultimate into a complex of simpler elements is at the same time intended as a refutation of the intuitional or 'moral sense' interpretation of conscience, and as a demonstration of the empirical and utilitarian, as against a rationalistic and intuitional account of the nature of morality. This ethical significance of the whole inquiry is made more clear in the *Fragment on Mackintosh*, in which Mill bitterly attacks a 'theory of the moral sentiments' which, refusing to follow out the doctrine of Association, as he thinks, to its full logical consequences, accepts the ultimateness of the moral, as distinguished from the utilitarian, element in the judgments of conscience.

But the scope and interest of the *Analysis* are far from being limited to ethics; indeed, as we read it, we are apt to lose sight of its underlying ethical purpose. It is with justice that J. S. Mill describes his father as 'the reviver and second founder of the Association psychology';[1] for in his hands that psychology becomes the basis not merely of an ethical theory but of a theory of

[1] Preface to ed. of *Analysis*, p. xii.

knowledge and reality. The result is a restatement of the Humian view of the world and the self, and of the Humian reduction of our so-called knowledge to customary belief.

The basis of the theory is laid in an extreme nominalism. All terms alike are simply the expression of the meaning of names, and the only reality corresponding to the name is some particular sensation or idea. General terms are the names of classes, and these classes consist of individuals. 'The business of classification is merely a process of naming, and is all resolvable into association.'[1] 'Men were led to class solely for the purpose of economising in the use of names.'[2] He entirely ignores the underlying connotation which accounts for the denotation of the general term. As J. S. Mill says, 'The only meaning of predicating a quality at all, is to affirm a resemblance.'[3] James Mill himself has to admit that the 'particular principle' of association concerned in classification is resemblance, which, though he suggests that it might possibly be reduced to the principle of contiguity (since like particulars occur, and therefore recur, together), he finally accepts as an independent principle.

The resulting theory of predication, as J. S. Mill points out, ignores the element of belief involved in it. 'The characteristic difference between a predication and any other form of speech, is, that it does not merely bring to mind a certain object (which is the only function of a mark, merely as such); it *asserts* something respecting it. . . . Whatever view we adopt of the psychological nature of Belief, it is necessary to distinguish between the mere suggestion to the mind of a certain order among sensations or ideas—such as takes place when we think of the alphabet, or the numeration table—and the indication that this order is an actual fact, which is occurring, or which has occurred once or oftener, or which, in certain definite circumstances, always occurs; which are the things indicated as true by an affirmative predication,

[1] *Analysis*, i. 269. [2] *Ibid.*, i. 260. [3] *Ibid.*, i. 261, note.

and as false by a negative one.'[1] Belief, according to James Mill, differs from imagination merely in the strength of the association in the one case as compared with the other. The association of the ideas is, in belief, inseparable; in imagination, separable. The proof of this would be, J. S. Mill says, 'the greatest of all the triumphs of the Association psychology,'[2] but he does not think the attempted proof successful. There may be inseparable association without belief, and belief without inseparable association. 'The difference between belief and mere imagination is the difference between recognising something as a reality in nature and regarding it as a mere thought of our own.'[3] It is this element of belief, thus objectively interpreted, that, according to J. S. Mill, distinguishes memory from imagination, a difference which James Mill interprets, after Hume, as one merely of degree.[4] The distinction between belief and imagination, J. S. Mill contends, resists analysis: it must be accepted as 'ultimate and primordial.'[5]

In the case of the Self, as in that of Belief, J. S. Mill finds his father's theory inadequate. The explanation of personal identity in terms of Association 'removes the outer veil, or husk, as it were, which wraps up the idea of the Ego. But after this is removed, there remains an inner covering, which, as far as I can perceive, is impenetrable.' Memory is explained by reference to Self, and Self by reference to Memory. 'By doing so, we explain neither. We only show that the two things are essentially the same.'[6] Here, again, we come to 'something ultimate.' James Mill speaks of 'that thread of consciousness, drawn out in succession, which I call myself,'[7] of 'that thread of consciousness in which, to me, my being consists,' 'the train of consciousness, which I call myself.'[8] But, as J. S. Mill contends, the bond which unites these various states in the consciousness of an identical Self is not

[1] *Analysis*, i. 162–3, note.
[2] *Ibid.*, i. 402.
[3] *Ibid.*, i. 418.
[4] *Ibid.*, i. 423.
[5] *Ibid.*, i. 412.
[6] *Ibid.*, ii. 173, 174.
[7] *Ibid.*, i. 17.
[8] *Ibid.*, ii. 197.

thereby explained. 'This succession of feelings, which I call my memory of the past, is that by which I distinguish my Self. Myself is the person who had that series of feelings, and I know nothing of myself, by direct knowledge, except that I had them. But there is a bond of some sort among all the parts of the series, which makes me say that they were feelings of a person who was the same person throughout, and a different person from those who had any of the parallel successions of feelings; and this bond, to me, constitutes my Ego. Here, I think, the question must rest, until some psychologist succeeds better than any one has yet done in shewing a mode in which the analysis can be carried further.'[1]

The general criticism which J. S. Mill makes upon his father's work is one with which there will be general agreement. 'It is chiefly . . . in leading him to identify two ultimate facts with one another, that his love of simplification, in itself a feeling highly worthy of a philosopher, seems to mislead him.'[2] On the other hand, we must admit, with the same kindly though candid critic, that the *Analysis* abounds in 'specimens of clear and vigorous statement, going straight to the heart of the matter, and dwelling on it just long enough and no longer than necessary.'[3] And if we must also agree with Leslie Stephen, that James Mill was 'at most a man of remarkable talent and the driest and sternest of logicians,'[4] and with Macaulay that his style is 'as dry as that of Euclid's Elements,' we must remember that, as the former writer says, 'Mill, as a publicist, a historian, and a busy official, had not had much time to spare for purely philosophic reading. He was not a professor in want of a system, but an energetic man of business, wishing to strike at the root of the superstitions to which his political opponents appealed for support.'[5]

One reason for the inadequate appreciation of James Mill by his contemporaries was, in the judgment of his

[1] *Analysis*, ii. 175. [2] *Ibid.*, ii. 380. [3] *Ibid.*, i. 133.
[4] *English Utilitarians*, ii. 38. [5] *Op. cit.*, ii. 288.

son, that he was not thoroughly in sympathy with the spirit of his own age. 'As Brutus was called the last of the Romans, so was he the last of the eighteenth century; he continued its tone of thought and sentiment into the nineteenth (though not unmodified nor unimproved), partaking neither in the good nor in the bad influences of the reaction against the eighteenth century, which was the great characteristic of the first half of the nineteenth.'[1] John Stuart Mill himself belongs to the new age; but the influence of Bentham and his father remained with him to the last, and the result is a curious mingling of the spirit of the two centuries. The key at once to the importance and to the defects of his philosophy is to be found in the peculiarity of his position as the thinker of an age of transition; in the fact that he represents two points of view, which he considers himself to have reconciled, but whose mutual opposition he never sufficiently grasped to effect their reconciliation,—the points of view of the eighteenth and of the nineteenth century. It was with deliberate purpose that he undertook the task of reconciliation. 'Though, at one period of my progress, I for some time undervalued that great century [the eighteenth], I never joined in the reaction against it, but kept as firm hold of one side of the truth as I took of the other. The fight between the nineteenth century and the eighteenth always reminded me of the battle about the shield, one side of which was white and the other black. I marvelled at the blind rage with which the combatants rushed against one another. I applied to them, and to Coleridge himself, many of Coleridge's sayings about half truths; and Goethe's device, "many-sidedness," was one which I would most willingly, at this period, have taken for mine.'[2] 'The besetting danger,' he remarks in his essay on Coleridge, 'is not so much of embracing falsehood for truth, as of mistaking part of the truth for the whole.'[3] In 'the Germano-Coleridgian doctrine' he sees 'the revolt of the human mind against

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 204.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[3] *Dissertations*, i. 399.

the philosophy of the eighteenth century.' 'It is ontological, because that was experimental; conservative, because that was innovative; religious, because so much of that was infidel; concrete and historical, because that was matter-of-fact and prosaic.'[1] He regards Bentham and Coleridge as 'the two great seminal minds of England in their age.'[2] 'Whoever could master the premises and combine the methods of both, would possess the entire English philosophy of his age. Coleridge used to say that every one is born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian: it may be similarly affirmed, that every Englishman of the present day is by implication either a Benthamite or a Coleridgian; holds views of human affairs which can only be proved true on the principles either of Bentham or of Coleridge.'[3] He is convinced of 'the importance, in the present imperfect state of mental and social science, of antagonist modes of thought: which, it will one day be felt, are as necessary to one another in speculation, as mutually checking powers are in the political constitution.'[4]

It is in this deliberate effort to combine two antagonistic but, as he believes, complementary points of view, rather than in any defect of philosophic strenuousness and persistence, that the explanation of Mill's 'inconsistencies' is to be found. It is doubtless true that by the characteristic temper of his mind, as well as by reason of his position in the history of thought, he was incapable of resting in any one position as finally satisfying; that, as Lord Morley has said, 'he never desisted, or stood still,' but 'was of the Socratic household,' in that his mind was always open to the apprehension of new truth, always ready to listen to the voice of the argument and to accept its conclusions, however disturbing to his previous convictions. He himself speaks of 'my great readiness and eagerness to learn from everybody, and to make room in my opinions for every new acquisition by adjusting the old and the new to one another.'[5] As Professor MacCunn has said,

[1] *Dissertations*, i. 403. [2] *Ibid.*, i. 331. [3] *Ibid.*, i. 397.
[4] *Ibid.*, i. 399. [5] *Autobiography*, p. 252.

'Better Mill's "inconsistencies" than the limited completeness of Bentham. Better his unsolved difficulties than the arrogant, narrow, self-confident logic of his father. For they are, at any rate, the fruits of an enlarged outlook and an enriched experience.'[1]

But the inconsistencies remain, and they are of the very essence of Mill's position as a transition-thinker. With all his new insight, he never really outgrew Benthamism, he never sufficiently revised his former premises in the light of the new truths which he found himself compelled to admit. He writes to Carlyle: 'You will see, partly, with what an immense number and variety of explanations my utilitarianism must be taken and that these explanations affect its essence, not merely its accidental forms. . . . I am still, and am likely to remain, a utilitarian, though not one of "the people called utilitarians"; indeed, having scarcely one of my secondary premises in common with them; nor a utilitarian at all, unless in quite another sense from what perhaps any one except myself understands by the word.'[2] 'What is now wanted,' he writes in his Diary of 1854, 'is the creed of Epicurus warmed by the additional element of an enthusiastic love of the general good.'[3] When we study the ethical theory, which its author still calls 'Utilitarianism,' and thus insists upon affiliating to that of Bentham, we cannot but feel with Martineau, that 'these modifications were torn from their connection and taken over to the Bentham side without their root.'[4] Although he had felt the spell of an ethical idealism the acceptance of which implied the surrender at once of the egoism and of the hedonism of the theory which he had been brought up to believe in as true, he seems to have been persuaded that the Utilitarianism of Bentham was capable of being developed into a theory which would do justice to all those ideal aspects of life and conduct which Bentham had ignored or misunderstood. Similarly in political philosophy, after growing up in the atmosphere of the extreme individualism of the

[1] *Six Radical Thinkers*, p. 86.
[2] *Letters*, i. 91.
[3] *Letters*, ii. 385.
[4] *Dissertations*, i. 493.

laissez faire doctrine of the Utilitarians or 'Philosophical Radicals,' he came later under the influence of French socialism; yet, after making remarkable concessions to the latter theory in his *Political Economy*, he wrote that essay on Liberty which has been regarded ever since as the classical statement of individualism. Finally, so far as the theory of knowledge and reality is concerned, in spite of the lessons which he learned from German idealism as conveyed to the English mind by Coleridge and Carlyle, he never saw his way to the surrender of that doctrine of Associationism which he had been taught by his father to regard as the final solution of all metaphysical problems.

The reading of Bentham's work, in Dumont's translation, was, Mill tells us in the *Autobiography*, 'an epoch in my life; one of the turning-points in my mental history. My previous education had been, in a certain sense, already a course of Benthamism. The Benthamite standard of "the greatest happiness" was that which I had always been taught to apply. . . . Yet in the first pages of Bentham it burst upon me with all the force of novelty.' What chiefly impressed him was Bentham's exposure of the concealed dogmatism of other ethical theories. 'It had not struck me before, that Bentham's principle put an end to all this. The feeling rushed upon me, that all previous moralists were superseded, and that here indeed was the commencement of a new era in thought.' This impression was confirmed by the scientific form of Bentham's reasoning, by 'the method of detail' which he employed. To the theoretical satisfaction were added 'the most inspiring prospects of practical improvement in human affairs': 'at every page he seemed to open a clearer and broader conception of what human opinions and institutions ought to be, how they might be made what they ought to be, and how far removed from it they now are. . . . When I laid down the first volume of the Traité, I had become a different being. The "principle of utility," understood as Bentham understood it, and applied in the manner in which he applied it . . .

fell exactly into its place as the keystone which held together the detached and fragmentary parts of my knowledge and beliefs. It gave unity to my conceptions of things. I now had opinions; a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy; in one among the best senses of the word, a religion; the inculcation and diffusion of which could be made the principal outward purpose of a life. And I had a grand conception laid before me of changes to be effected in the condition of mankind through that doctrine.'[1] Though he afterwards became conscious of the serious limitations of Bentham's philosophical outlook, and found it necessary to incorporate in the theory many elements of crucial importance which its author had ignored, Mill's early enthusiasm for the 'principle of utility' never really waned. In the essay on Whewell's moral philosophy (1852) he says: 'It is by his *method* chiefly that Bentham, as we think, justly earned a position in moral science analogous to that of Bacon in physical. It is because he was the first to enter into the right mode of working ethical problems, though he worked many of them, as Bacon did physical, on insufficient data.'[2] It is necessary, he insists in the *Utilitarianism*, to reduce our various moral principles, accepted by the intuitionists as equally ultimate, to 'one first principle, or common ground of obligation.' 'The non-existence of an acknowledged first principle has made ethics not so much a guide as a consecration of men's actual sentiments.' And he agrees with Bentham that 'the fundamental principle of morality, and the source of moral obligation' is to be found in the principle of utility, or 'the influence of actions on happiness.'[3]

Perhaps the main factor in effecting the transition from Benthamism to a more idealistic version of the Utilitarian theory was the mental crisis through which Mill passed in 1826, and from which he found deliverance in the study of Wordsworth. The almost complete loss of happiness, which was the result of a too introspective

[1] *Autobiog.*, pp. 64–66. [2] *Dissertations*, ii. 462. [3] *Utilit.*, ch. i.

pursuit of it, taught him the truth of 'what at that time I certainly had never heard of, the anti-self-consciousness theory of Carlyle. I never, indeed, wavered in the conviction that happiness is the test of all rules of conduct, and the end of life. But I now thought that this end was only to be attained by not making it the direct end. Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way. . . . Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so. The only chance is to treat, not happiness, but some end external to it, as the purpose of life. . . . This theory now became the basis of my philosophy of life.'[1] This altered emphasis was further encouraged by his friendship with Carlyle, Maurice, and Sterling, as well as by the study of the writings of Coleridge and the acquaintance which he thus acquired with German idealism.

His close association with the leaders of the movement called 'Philosophical Radicalism,' and especially his regard for his father's feelings, restrained Mill from the expression of a dissent which he had gradually learned to entertain from the theory of Utilitarianism, as formulated by Bentham and accepted by his followers. But two years after the death of his father, he published in the *London and Westminster Review* (1832) an essay on Bentham which clearly shows how far he had travelled from orthodox Benthamism. While still emphasising Bentham's merits as a practical reformer, Mill in this essay depreciates in the most serious way his qualities as a moralist. His fatal defect is his narrowness of moral vision, his limitation of view; and this, in turn, is the result of his defect of sympathy and imagination. Bentham's disregard of all previous theories, as 'vague generalities,' has blinded him to much that is essential in the moral nature of man: 'these

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 142.

generalities contained the whole unanalysed experience of the human race.'[1] This failure to take account of 'the collective mind of the human race,' as reflected in the theories of other philosophers, was the more disastrous, in Bentham's case, on account of 'the incompleteness of his own mind as a representative of universal human nature.' 'In many of the most natural and strongest feelings of human nature he had no sympathy; from many of its graver experiences he was altogether cut off.'[2] 'He saw accordingly in man little but what the vulgarest eye can see; recognised no diversities of character but such as he who runs may read.' The result is that he was 'a systematic half-thinker.' 'The truths which are not Bentham's, which his philosophy takes no account of, are many and important . . . and it is a comparatively easy task that is reserved for us, to harmonise those truths with his. To reject his half of the truth because he overlooked the other half, would be to fall into his error without having his excuse.'[3]

Among the truths which Bentham failed to recognise, Mill specially mentions that 'man is never recognised by him as a being capable of pursuing spiritual perfection as an end; of desiring, for its own sake, the conformity of his own character to his standard of excellence, without hope of good or fear of evil from other source than his own inward consciousness. Even in the more limited form of Conscience, this great fact in human nature escapes him. Nothing is more curious than the absence of recognition in any of his writings of the existence of conscience.'[4] Similarly with 'self-respect.' And 'he but faintly recognises, as a fact in human nature, the pursuit of any other ideal end for its own sake.'[5] 'How far,' Mill asks, 'will this view of human nature and life carry any one? . . . What will it do for the individual and what for society? It will do nothing for the conduct of the individual, beyond prescribing some of the more obvious dictates of worldly prudence and outward

[1] *Dissertations*, i. 351. [2] *Ibid.*, i. 353. [3] *Ibid.*, i. 357.
[4] *Ibid.*, i. 359. [5] *Ibid.*, i. 360.

probity and beneficence. . . . It will enable a society which has attained a certain state of spiritual development, and the maintenance of which in that state is otherwise provided for, to prescribe the rules by which it may protect its material interests. It will do nothing . . . for the spiritual interests of society.'[1] If the principle of utility is to be justly interpreted, it must be applied to all the facts of our moral experience. In particular, it must explain, not ignore or explain away, the conscientious feelings of mankind; it must take account of, and interpret, the ideal interests of human life. In the essay on Liberty, published in 1859, but 'first planned and written as a short essay in 1854,' he says: 'I regard utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions; but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being.'[2] He adopts as the motto of the essay the words of Von Humboldt: 'The grand, leading principle, towards which every argument unfolded in these pages directly converges, is the absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest diversity.' He quotes with approval the same author's doctrine that 'the end of man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal or immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole,' and that, therefore, the object 'towards which every human being must ceaselessly direct his efforts, and on which especially those who design to influence their fellow-men must ever keep their eyes, is the individuality of power and development.'[3] To 'individuality as one of the elements of well-being' he devotes perhaps the most important chapter of the work.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find Mill, in the essay on *Utilitarianism*, first published as a series of articles in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1861, announcing his great innovation upon all previous versions of the hedonistic

[1] *Dissertations*, i. 363–5. [2] *Liberty*, Introd. [3] *Ibid.*, ch. iii.

theory of morals—the doctrine that pleasures differ in kind or quality, as well as in quantity or degree; that mental are superior to bodily pleasures, not only, as previous hedonists have insisted, in their 'circumstantial advantages,' but in their 'intrinsic nature.' 'It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone.' 'A being of higher faculties requires more to make him happy, is capable probably of more acute suffering, and certainly accessible to it at more points, than one of an inferior type; but in spite of these liabilities, he can never really wish to sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence.' This unwillingness is due to 'a sense of dignity, which all human beings possess in one form or another, and in some, though by no means in exact, proportion to their higher faculties, and which is so essential a part of the happiness of those in whom it is strong that nothing which conflicts with it could be, otherwise than momentarily, an object of desire to them.'[1]

Similarly he recognises the sense of duty or 'the conscientious feelings of mankind,' as the 'internal sanction' of right conduct, which he adds to the 'external sanctions' of Bentham. 'Its binding force . . . consists in the existence of a mass of feeling which must be broken through in order to do what violates our standard of right, and which, if we do nevertheless violate that standard, will probably have to be encountered afterwards in the form of remorse. Whatever theory we have of the nature or origin of conscience, this is what essentially constitutes it.' It does not follow that, because the 'moral feelings' are not innate but acquired, they are the less natural: 'the moral faculty, if not a part of our nature, is a natural

[1] *Utilit.*, ch. ii.

outgrowth from it.' There is 'a natural basis of sentiment for utilitarian morality,' in which its real strength is found. 'This firm foundation is that of the social feelings of mankind; the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures. . . . This feeling in most individuals is much inferior in strength to their selfish feelings, and is often wanting altogether. But to those who have it, it possesses all the characters of a natural feeling. It does not present itself to their minds as a superstition of education, or a law despotically imposed by the power of society, but as an attribute which it would not be well for them to be without. This conviction is the ultimate sanction of the greatest happiness morality.'[1]

Although Hume had recognised the existence of sympathy or disinterested regard for the general happiness, Bentham, like Paley, had insisted upon self-interest as the only possible motive of human conduct. Mill affirms the possibility of altruism in the motive, as well as in the end or criterion, of right action. 'Let utilitarians never cease to claim the morality of self-devotion as a possession which belongs by as good a right to them as either to the Stoic or to the Transcendentalist. The utilitarian morality does recognise in human beings the power of sacrificing their own greatest good for the good of others. It only refuses to admit that the sacrifice is itself a good. . . . As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him [the individual] to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbour as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality. . . . If the impugners of the utilitarian morality represented it to their minds in this its true character, I know not what recommendation possessed by any other morality they could possibly affirm to be wanting to it; what more beautiful or more exalted developments of

[1] *Ibid.*, ch. iii.

human nature any other ethical system can be supposed to foster, or what springs of action, not accessible to the utilitarian, such systems rely on for giving effect to their mandates.'[1]

Yet Mill defines Utilitarianism in Bentham's familiar terms. 'The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure.' The 'supplementary explanations' which require to be added to this definition, he affirms, 'do not affect the theory of life on which this theory of morality is grounded—namely, that pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends; and that all desirable things (which are as numerous in the utilitarian as in any other scheme) are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain.'[2] Moreover, he finds the 'proof' of the principle of utility in Bentham's theory of desire. 'No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness.'[3] He explains the desire of other things as either the desire of means to happiness or the desire of things which, formerly desired as means, have by association taken the place of the end itself. He makes no attempt to reconcile this doctrine of psychological hedonism either with his acknowledgment of the naturalness of sympathy or with the obligatoriness of the general happiness upon the individual.

The presence of these fundamental inconsistencies in Mill's ethical theory may be partly explained by the fact that for him, as well as for Bentham, the 'principle of Utility' was not so much an ethical principle as a method

[1] *Utilit.*, ch. ii. [2] *Loc. cit.* [3] *Utilit.*, ch. iv.

of social and political reform, and that the principle of individual liberty was more important, in his eyes as well as in theirs, than that of utility. 'It is plain,' says Professor Dicey, 'that it is the doctrine of *laissez faire* which has really governed Benthamite legislation.'[1] 'Though *laissez faire* is not an essential part of utilitarianism it was practically the most vital part of Bentham's legislative doctrine, and in England gave to the movement for the reform of the law, both its powers and its character.'[2] The intensity of the individualism of the Utilitarians was chiefly due to their conviction that the great social evil was the predominance of class-interests over national interests in determining the action of Government. The constant object of their attack was that 'sinister interest' which, in one form or another, was always asserting itself as the rival of the true interest of society and, therefore, of the individual. It was because the only government they knew was a government vitiated by self-interest, because in their experience 'a political trust was habitually confounded with private property,'[3] that they found it necessary to defend the individual from governmental interference with his interests. The representative and democratic form of government does not save it from this evil; in some ways, as Mill argues, it only intensifies the evil. Mill's essay on Liberty is the philosophical statement of this Utilitarian view of the relation of society to the individual. Professor Dicey says that it 'appeared, to thousands of admiring disciples, to provide the final and conclusive demonstration of the absolute truth of individualism, and to establish on firm ground the doctrine that the protection of freedom was the one great object of wise law and sound policy.'[4] 'Such phrases as "self-government" and "the power of the people over themselves,"' Mill argues, 'do not express the true state of the case.' Even in a democracy it is

[1] *Law and Opinion in England*, p. 145, note.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[3] Leslie Stephen, *English Utilitarians*, ii. 90.
[4] *Law and Opinion in England*, p. 182.

only a part of the people, the majority, that really governs; and the 'tyranny of the majority' is not less real than that of the individual despot; it may well be an even more oppressive form of tyranny, since it is social as well as political, 'penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself.' The inevitable result of this oppression of the individual by society is the encouragement of mediocrity, the discouragement of distinction. 'Those whose opinions go by the name of public opinion are not always the same sort of public. . . . But they are always a mass, that is to say, collective mediocrity.'

What, then, Mill asks, is the proper limit of governmental interference with the liberty of the individual? 'The sole end,' he replies, 'for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. . . . The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. . . . The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign. . . . The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it.' This principle follows, Mill argues, from that of 'Utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being.' 'Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest.'[1] The individual, as he has the most intimate knowledge of his own good, is also the best judge of the means which lead to it.

[1] *Liberty*, Introd.

Moreover, 'it is desirable that in things which do not primarily concern others, individuality should assert itself. Where, not the person's own character, but the traditions or customs of other people, are the rules of conduct, there is wanting one of the chief ingredients of human happiness, and quite the chief ingredient of individual and social progress.'[1] It is desirable, in the interests of the general well-being, that there should be as many and as varied experiments in living as possible; even eccentricity is better than the dull and dead uniformity of type which is encouraged by social and political control of the individual. Finally, every addition to the functions of government constitutes a new step in the direction of bureaucracy, and bureaucracy is the grave of individuality.

On the other hand, it is to be noted that there is nothing in Mill's theory of individual liberty to invalidate the increasing interference of the State with the industrial liberty of the individual; and we know, from his treatise on Political Economy (especially the chapter 'On the Probable Futurity of the Labouring Classes,')[2] as well as from his *Autobiography*, how far he was willing to go in the direction of Socialism and how carefully he sought to co-ordinate economic with ethical well-being. Even in the essay on Liberty he protests against 'misapplied notions of liberty,' as 'a real obstacle to the fulfilment by the State of its duties,' and affirms that 'the State, while it respects the liberty of each in what specially regards himself, is bound to maintain a vigilant control over his exercise of any power which it allows him to possess over others.' As regards the State's interference with the industrial life, in particular, he insists upon the distinction between economic and moral freedom. 'Restrictions on trade, or on production for purposes of trade, are indeed restraints; and all restraint, *quâ* restraint, is an evil: but the restraints in question affect only that part of conduct which society is competent to restrain. . . . As the principle of individual liberty is not involved in the

[1] *Liberty*, ch. iii.

[2] *Polit. Econ.*, bk. iv. ch. vii.

doctrine of Free Trade, so neither is it in most of the questions which arise respecting the limits of that doctrine: as, for example . . . how far sanitary precautions, or arrangements to protect work-people employed in dangerous occupations, should be enforced on employers. Such questions involve considerations of liberty, only in so far as leaving people to themselves is always better, *caeteris paribus*, than controlling them: but that they may be legitimately controlled for these ends, is in principle undeniable.'[1] As for the 'liberty of combination,' which was one of the burning questions of the time, he regards it as so far from contradicting the doctrine of individual liberty that it is the corollary of that doctrine. 'From this liberty of each individual, follows the liberty, within the same limits, of combination among individuals; freedom to unite, for any purpose not involving harm to others: the persons combining being supposed to be of full age, and not forced or deceived.'[2]

Lord Morley has remarked of Mill that he 'recognised the social destination of knowledge, and kept the elevation of the great art of social existence ever before him, as the ultimate end of all speculative activity.'[3] This conviction of the practical significance of philosophy finds expression more than once in Mill's own works. 'Speculative philosophy,' he says, 'which to the superficial appears a thing so remote from the business of life and the outward interests of men, is in reality the thing on earth which most influences them, and in the long run overbears every other influence save those which it must itself obey.'[4] The difference between Intuitionism and Empiricism is, as he understands it, practical as well as theoretical; and it was the practical aspect of the controversy that chiefly interested him, and that prompted him to write the *Logic*. 'The *System of Logic* supplies what was much wanted, a text-book of the opposite doctrine [to the "German, or *a priori* view of human knowledge, and of the knowing

[1] *Liberty*, ch. v.
[2] *Ibid.*, Introd.
[3] *Critical Miscellanies*, iii. 42.
[4] *Dissertations*, i. 330.

faculties"]—that which derives all knowledge from experience, and all moral and intellectual qualities principally from the direction given to the associations. . . . The notion that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation and experience, is, I am persuaded, in these times, the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions. By the aid of this theory, every inveterate belief and every intense feeling, of which the origin is not remembered, is enabled to dispense with the obligation of justifying itself by reason, and is erected into its own all-sufficient voucher and justification. There never was such an instrument devised for consecrating all deep-seated prejudices.'[1]

Empiricism is 'the doctrine of the school of Locke and of Bentham,' as opposed to that of German Transcendentalism and Scottish Intuitionism; and Mill is convinced that the truth lies with the former type of philosophical theory. 'We see no ground for believing that anything can be the object of our knowledge except our experience, and what can be inferred from our experience by the analogies of experience itself; nor that there is any idea, feeling, or power in the human mind, which, in order to account for it, requires that its origin should be referred to any other source.'[2] Yet the Transcendentalists have performed the important service of compelling that 'entire renovation' of which the Lockian doctrine stood in need. 'It perhaps required all the violence of the assaults made by Reid and the German school upon Locke's system, to recall men's minds to Hartley's principles, as alone adequate to the solution, upon that system, of the peculiar difficulties which those assailants pressed upon men's attention as altogether insoluble by it.'[3] The repudiation of the shallow doctrine of French Ideology, that corrupt version of the Lockian tradition, was 'the first sign that the age of real psychology was about to commence.'[4] In his *Autobiography* Mill

[1] *Autobiog.*, p. 225.
[2] *Dissertations*, i. 409.
[3] *Ibid.*, i. 412.
[4] *Ibid.*, i. 411.

speaks of 'analytic psychology' as 'that most important branch of speculation, on which all the moral and political sciences ultimately rest.'[1] As his aim in ethics is to develop the implications of the principle of Utility, his purpose in the discussion of the wider questions of general philosophy is to develop and apply the principle of Association, the principle of Hartley, as modified by his father in the *Analysis*. The result is seen in the *System of Logic* and the *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, the former published in 1843, the latter in 1865.

The *Logic* is Mill's only systematic treatise in philosophy; and apart from its speculative interest, it is a work of epoch-making importance in logical theory. Höffding's estimate is hardly exaggerated when he says that 'it is not easy to find a parallel to this work unless we go back to Aristotle; what the latter did for the syllogism and for deductive logic, Mill has done for induction, for the logic of experimental science.'[2] As Aristotle reduced to rule the procedure of the Socratic and Platonic dialectic, Mill has formulated the methods underlying and regulating the procedure of modern science. As the Aristotelian logic states the methods of argumentation, Mill's logic states the methods of experimentation. The great merit of Mill, as compared with Bacon, his only important predecessor in this field, is that he appreciates the value of the deductive method as an indispensable element in the complete method of science. While he insists, no less emphatically than Bacon, upon the inductive basis of all scientific explanation, he sees the limitation of an induction which is not supplemented by deduction. If Bacon's repudiation of the deductive method was necessary as a protest against the empty argumentation of Scholastic philosophy, the lesson needed by the modern scientific mind is that the complete scientific method is deductive as well as inductive, and that the ideal of scientific explanation is the

[1] *Autobiog.*, p. 204.
[2] *Einleitung in die englische Philosophie unserer Zeit*, p. 33.

combination of induction and deduction, of analysis and synthesis.

The aim of all scientific investigation being the discovery of the causal relations of phenomena, and the cause being the unconditional antecedent—that condition, or sum of conditions, whose presence is followed by the presence of the consequent and whose absence is followed by the absence of the consequent, what is needed is some clear guide to the detection of these causal relations. Mill formulates five such guiding methods—the method of agreement, that of difference, the joint or double method of agreement and difference, the method of residues, and that of concomitant variations. The common feature of these methods—the one real method of scientific inquiry—is, as Taine points out, that of elimination.[1] All the other methods are thus subordinate to the method of difference. Here we have a case of the occurrence of the phenomenon under investigation and a case of its non-occurrence, these cases having every circumstance in common save one, that one occurring only in the former; and we are warranted in concluding that this circumstance, in which alone the two cases differ, is either the cause or a necessary part of the cause of the phenomenon.

It is only in the simpler cases of causal connexion, however, that we can apply these direct methods of observation and experiment. In the more complex cases we have to employ the 'deductive method,' which consists of three operations—induction, ratiocination or deduction, and verification. 'To the Deductive Method, thus characterised in its three constituent parts—Induction, Ratiocination, and Verification—the human mind is indebted for its most conspicuous triumphs in the investigation of nature. To it we owe all the theories by which vast and complicated phenomena are embraced under a few simple laws, which, considered as the laws of those great phenomena, could never have been detected by their direct study.'[2] We deduce the law or cause of a complex effect

[1] *Le positivisme anglais*, Eng. trans., p. 58.
[2] *Logic*, bk. iii. ch. xi. sect. 3.

from the laws of the separate causes whose concurrence gives rise to it. For example, 'the mechanical and chemical laws of the solid and fluid substances composing the organised body and the medium in which it subsists, together with the peculiar vital laws of the different tissues constituting the organic structure,' afford the clue to 'the laws on which the phenomena of life depend.'[1] But these 'laws of the different causes' must first be ascertained by direct induction, and finally verified, as the causes actually operative in the complex effect, by comparison with the facts of the case. Thus the entire process is based on induction. 'To warrant reliance on the general conclusions arrived at by deduction, these conclusions must be found, on careful comparison, to accord with the results of direct observation wherever it can be had. . . . Thus it was very reasonably deemed an essential requisite of any true theory of the causes of the celestial motions, that it should lead by deduction to Kepler's laws; which, accordingly, the Newtonian theory did.'[2]

The validity of the entire inductive process is thus clearly seen to depend upon the validity of its underlying assumption, the law of causation itself. Assuming that every phenomenon has a cause, or invariable and unconditional antecedent, we investigate the problem of causation in detail. Is this fundamental assumption itself valid? Mill cannot avail himself of the theory that the 'law of universal causation' is an intuition of reason or an *a priori* and transcendental principle. For him the only possible view is that 'the belief we entertain in the universality, throughout nature, of the law of cause and effect, is itself an instance of induction. . . . We arrive at this universal law by generalisation from many laws of inferior generality. We should never have had the notion of causation (in the philosophical meaning of the term) as a condition of all phenomena, unless many cases of causation, or, in other words, many partial uniformities of

[1] *Logic*, III. xi. 1. [2] *Ibid.*, III. xi. 3.

sequence, had previously become familiar. The more obvious of the particular uniformities suggest, and give evidence of, the general uniformity, and the general uniformity, once established, enables us to prove the remainder of the particular uniformities of which it is made up.'[1] These early inductions, which result in the law of universal causation, cannot belong to the same type as those rigorous inductions which conform to the canons of scientific induction and presuppose the law of universal causation; they belong to 'the loose and uncertain mode of induction *per enumerationem simplicem*.' How, then, can a process whose basis is thus loose and uncertain have any certain validity? Mill's answer is that induction by simple enumeration, or 'generalisation of an observed fact from the mere absence of any known instance to the contrary,' as contrasted with the critical induction of science, is a valid, though a fallible process, which must precede the less fallible forms of the inductive process, and that 'the precariousness of the method of simple enumeration is in an inverse ratio to the largeness of the generalisation.' 'As the sphere widens, this unscientific method becomes less and less liable to mislead; and the most universal class of truths, the law of causation, for instance, and the principles of number and geometry, are duly and satisfactorily proved by that method alone, nor are they susceptible of any other proof.'[2]

The universality of the law of causation, as it is an induction from our experience, does not extend to 'circumstances unknown to us, and beyond the possible range of our experience.' 'In distant parts of the stellar regions, where the phenomena may be entirely unlike those with which we are acquainted, it would be folly to affirm confidently that this general law prevails, any more than those special ones which we have found to hold universally on our own planet. The uniformity in the succession of events, otherwise called the law of causation, must be received, not as a law of the universe, but of that portion of

[1] *Logic*, III. xxi. 2. [2] *Ibid.*, III. xxi. 3.

it only which is within the range of our means of sure observation, with a reasonable degree of extension to adjacent cases. To extend it further is to make a supposition without evidence, and to which, in the absence of any ground from experience for estimating its degree of probability, it would be idle to attempt to assign any.'[1] There is no difficulty in conceiving 'that in some one, for instance, of the many firmaments into which sidereal astronomy now divides the universe, events may succeed one another at random without any fixed law; nor can anything in our experience, or in our mental nature, constitute a sufficient, or indeed any, reason for believing that this is nowhere the case.'[2]

The appearance of paradox in the view that the law of causation is at once the presupposition and the result of induction disappears, according to Mill, with 'the old theory of reasoning, which supposes the universal truth, or major premise, in a ratiocination, to be the real proof of the particular truths which are ostensibly inferred from it.'[3] His own view is that 'the major premise is not the proof of the conclusion, but is itself proved, along with the conclusion, from the same evidence.' The old theory implies that the syllogism is a *petitio principii*, since the conclusion which is supposed to be proved is already contained in the major premise; if we know that 'all men are mortal,' we know, and do not require to prove, that 'Socrates is mortal.' 'No reasoning from generals to particulars can, as such, prove anything, since from a general principle we cannot infer any particulars, but those which the principle itself assumes as known.'[4] The only use of the syllogism is to convict your opponent of inconsistency; it cannot lead us from the known to the unknown. In reality the major premise is a register of previous inductions and a short formula for making more. 'The conclusion is not an inference drawn *from* the formula, but an inference drawn *according* to the formula; the real logical antecedent

[1] *Logic*, III. xxi. 4.
[2] *Ibid.*, III. xxi. 1.
[3] *Ibid.*, III. xxi. 4.
[4] *Ibid.*, II. iii. 2.

or premise being the particular facts from which the general proposition was collected by induction.'[1] The major premise is merely a shorthand note, to assist the memory. 'The inference is finished when we have asserted that all men are mortal. What remains to be performed afterwards is merely deciphering our own notes.' The mistake of the traditional view is 'that of referring a person to his own notes for the origin of his knowledge. If a person is asked a question, and is at the moment unable to answer it, he may refresh his memory by turning to a memorandum which he carries about with him. But if he were asked, how the fact came to his knowledge, he would scarcely answer, because it was set down in his notebook: unless the book was written, like the Koran, with a quill from the wing of the angel Gabriel.'[2] All inference is from particulars to particulars; the syllogistic process is only an interpretation of our notes of previous inferences. 'If we had sufficiently capacious memories, and a sufficient power of maintaining order among a huge mass of details, the reasoning could go on without any general propositions; they are mere formulæ for inferring particulars from particulars.'[3]

Syllogistic reasoning is thus a circuitous way of reaching a conclusion which might have been reached directly, like going up a hill and down again when we might have travelled along the level road. There is no reason why we should be compelled to take the 'high priori road' except 'the arbitrary fiat of logicians.' 'Not only *may* we reason from particulars to particulars without passing through generals, but we perpetually do so reason. All our earliest inferences are of this nature.'[4] Mill, however, acknowledges 'the immense advantage, in point of security for correctness, which is gained by interposing this step between the real evidence and the conclusion,' the importance of 'the appeal to former experience in the major premise of the syllogism.'[5] When we say that Socrates is mortal, because he is a

[1] *Logic*, II. iii. 4. [2] *Ibid.*, III. iii. 3. [3] *Ibid.*, III. iv. 3.
[4] *Ibid.*, II. iii. 3. [5] *Ibid.*, II. iii. 6.

man, and all men are mortal, we assert that because he resembles the other individuals in the attributes connoted by the term man, he resembles them further in the attribute mortality. 'Whether, from the attributes in which Socrates resembles those men who have heretofore died, it is allowable to infer that he resembles them also in being mortal, is a question of Induction.'[1] The major premise is the record and reminder that we have made that induction, and are therefore not merely warranted, but required, to apply it in the particular case before us.

'The chief strength of this false philosophy [intuitionism] in morals, politics, and religion,' Mill remarks in his *Autobiography*, 'lies in the appeal which it is accustomed to make to the evidence of mathematics and of the cognate branches of physical science. To expel it from these, is to drive it from its stronghold : and because this had never been effectually done, the intuitive school, even after what my father had written in his Analysis of the Mind, had in appearance, and as far as published writings were concerned, on the whole the best of the argument. In attempting to clear up the real nature of the evidence of mathematical and physical truths, the "System of Logic" met the intuitive philosophers on ground on which they had previously been deemed unassailable ; and gave its own explanation, from experience and association, of that peculiar character of what are called necessary truths, which is adduced as proof that their evidence must come from a deeper source than experience.'[2] The peculiar certainty and necessity attributed to these truths is, he argues, 'an illusion, in order to sustain which, it is necessary to suppose that those truths relate to, and express the properties of purely imaginary objects.' As a matter of fact, the truths of geometry do not hold, except approximately, of the real world, but only of that imaginary world which corresponds to its initial definitions. The truth is that

[1] *Logic*, II. iii. 7.

[2] *Autobiog.*, p. 226.

geometry 'is built on hypotheses; that it owes to this alone the peculiar certainty supposed to distinguish it; and that in any science whatever, by reasoning from a set of hypotheses, we may obtain a body of conclusions as certain as those of geometry, that is, as strictly in accordance with the hypotheses, and as irresistibly compelling assent, *on condition* that those hypotheses are true.'[1] As for the axioms which, together with the definitions, form the basis of geometrical reasoning, they are in reality 'experimental truths, generalisations from observation.' The great argument for their *a priori* character is that their opposites are inconceivable. But conceivability 'has very little to do with the possibility of the thing in itself, but is in truth very much an affair of accident, and depends on the past history and habits of our own minds.'[2] It is the effect of habitual association, itself the result of our earliest and most widely based inductions from experience; it is an acquired incapacity which can hardly but be mistaken for a natural one, an experimental truth which can hardly but be mistaken for a necessary one.

It is in the application of the inductive and psychological method to social and political problems that Mill sees the crowning achievement of scientific investigation. This application has yet to be made; the 'Germano-Coleridgian school' were 'the first (except a solitary thinker here and there) who inquired with any comprehensiveness or depth, into the inductive laws of the existence and growth of human society.'[3] To the consideration of this new science of 'Ethology,' or the study of the causes influencing the formation of national character, the final book of the *Logic* is devoted. In thus seeking to inaugurate a scientific Sociology, Mill was undoubtedly influenced by Comte, but he was also proceeding on the familiar lines of the Utilitarians, who always regarded character as the product of circumstances, and looked to education to effect the transition

[1] *Logic*, II. v. 1. [2] *Ibid.*, II. v. 6. [3] *Dissertations*, i. 425.

from the present unsatisfactory state of things to one more in accordance with their social ideal. The indefinite modifiability of human nature by circumstances is the working hypothesis of the school; all that Mill adds is the demand that social life be conducted on scientific principles. It is significant that Mill finally abandoned the intention to construct the scheme of such a science, and devoted his energies to the writing of his *Political Economy*, published five years after the *Logic*, in 1848. It would be difficult to reconcile the view of the growth of character implied in the desiderated 'Ethology' with his insistence upon the importance of individuality, and his protest against the interference of society with the liberty of the individual, in the essay on Liberty, published in 1859.

Mill's only other work in general philosophy is the *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, published in 1865. 'I mean in this book,' he writes to Bain, 'to do what the nature and scope of the "Logic" forbade me to do there, to face the ultimate metaphysical difficulties of every question on which I touch.'[1] The discussion of Hamilton's philosophy was intended, as we learn from the *Autobiography*, to be made the occasion of a thorough-going examination of the rival philosophies of Intuitionism and Empiricism, the controversy between which had, in Mill's eyes, as we have already seen, the utmost practical and social significance. 'The difference between these two schools of philosophy, that of Intuition, and that of Experience and Association, is not a mere matter of abstract speculation; it is full of practical consequences, and lies at the foundation of all the greatest differences of practical opinion in an age of progress. The practical reformer has continually to demand that changes be made in things which are supported by powerful and widely-spread feelings, or to question the apparent necessity and inde-

[1] *Letters*, i. 271.

feasibleness of established facts; and it is often an indispensable part of his argument to show how those powerful feelings had their origin, and how those facts came to seem necessary and indefeasible. There is therefore a natural hostility between him and a philosophy which discourages the explanation of feelings and moral facts by circumstances and association, and prefers to treat them as ultimate elements of human nature; a philosophy which is addicted to holding up favourite doctrines as intuitive truths, and deems intuition to be the voice of Nature and of God, speaking with an authority higher than that of our reason. In particular, I have long felt that the prevailing tendency to regard all the marked distinctions of human character as innate, and in the main indelible, and to ignore the irresistible proofs that by far the greater part of those differences, whether between individuals, races, or sexes, are such as not only might but naturally would be produced by differences in circumstances, is one of the chief hindrances to the rational treatment of great social questions, and one of the greatest stumbling blocks to human improvement.' It was necessary, therefore, to determine the issue between these two philosophies. The pretensions of Intuitionism had received a series of salutary checks by the publication of the elder Mill's *Analysis*, of Mill's own *Logic*, and of 'Professor Bain's great treatise.' 'But I had for some time felt that the mere contrast of the two philosophies was not enough, that there ought to be a hand-to-hand fight between them, that controversial as well as expository writings were needed, and that the time was come when such controversy would be useful. Considering then the writings and fame of Sir W. Hamilton as the great fortress of the intuitional philosophy in this country, a fortress the more formidable from the imposing character, and the in many respects great personal merits and mental endowments, of the man, I thought it might be a real service to philosophy to attempt a thorough examination of all his most important doctrines, and an estimate of his general claims to eminence as a philosopher.' This

resolution was confirmed by the 'profoundly immoral' view of religion which had been deduced by Mansel from the Hamiltonian doctrine of Relativity.[1]

It is unnecessary to follow this hand-to-hand encounter in detail. It shows Mill at his best, but does not add materially to the statement of his own position already given in the *Logic*. The only important addition is the application of the 'psychological theory' to our belief in an External World and in Mind. As regards the former, Mill elaborates his famous view of the External World as 'a Permanent Possibility of Sensation.'[2] As regards the latter, he elaborates the view of the Self already referred to, as stated more briefly in the Notes to the *Analysis*, published three years later. 'If we speak of the Mind as a series of feelings, we are obliged to complete the statement by calling it a series of feelings which is aware of itself as past and future; and we are reduced to the alternative of believing that the Mind, or Ego, is something different from any series of feelings, or possibilities of them, or of accepting the paradox, that something which *ex hypothesi* is but a series of feelings, can be aware of itself as a series. The truth is, that we are here face to face with that final inexplicability, at which, as Sir W. Hamilton observes, we inevitably arrive when we reach ultimate facts; and in general, one mode of stating it only appears more incomprehensible than another, because the whole of human language is accommodated to the one, and is so incongruous with the other, that it cannot be expressed in any terms which do not deny its truth. The real stumbling block is perhaps not in any theory of the fact, but in the fact itself. . . . I think, by far the wisest thing we can do, is to accept the inexplicable fact, without any theory of how it takes place; and when we are obliged to speak of it in terms which assume a theory, to use them with a reservation as to their meaning.'[3] In the Appendix to Chapters XI. and XII. he speaks more positively of the Self. 'The

[1] *Autobiog.*, pp. 273-275. [2] *Examination*, ch. xi. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 248.

inexplicable tie, or law, the organic union (as Professor Masson calls it) which connects the present consciousness with the past one, of which it reminds me, is as near as I think we can get to a positive conception of the Self. That there is something real in this tie, real as the sensations themselves, and not a mere product of the laws of thought without any fact corresponding to it, I hold to be indubitable. . . . This original element, which has no community of nature with any of the things answering to our names, and to which we cannot give any name but its own peculiar one without implying some false or unguarded theory, is the Ego, or Self. As such, I ascribe a reality to the Ego—to my own Mind—different from that real existence as a Permanent Possibility, which is the only reality I acknowledge in Matter : and by fair experiential inference from that one Ego, I ascribe the same reality to other Egoes, or Minds. . . . We are forced to apprehend every part of the series as linked with the other parts by something in common, which is not the feelings themselves, any more than the succession of the feelings is the feelings themselves : and as that which is the same in the first as in the second, in the second as in the third, in the third as in the fourth, and so on, must be the same in the first and in the fiftieth, this common element is a permanent element.'[1]

The posthumously published volume of *Essays on Religion* contains three essays—on Nature, the Utility of Religion, and Theism. The first and second were written between 1850 and 1858, that is, during the same period as the essays on Utilitarianism and on Liberty, while the third belongs to a much later time, having been written between 1868 and 1870, and is thus 'the last considerable work which he completed,' and 'shows the latest state of the Author's mind, the carefully balanced result of the deliberations of a lifetime.'[2]

The first essay is a protest against the view that the ideal

[1] *Examination*, pp. 262, 263. [2] *Essays on Religion*, Preface.

of human conduct is found in conformity to Nature. It reminds us of Huxley's later condemnation, in his famous Romanes lecture on 'Evolution and Ethics,' of the cosmic process from the ethical point of view. 'In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another, are nature's every day performances.'[1] It is a protest rather against naturalistic ethics than against Natural Theology, but the latter is included in the same condemnation with the former type of theory. The Author of Nature cannot be at once good and omnipotent.

The main argument of the essay on the Utility of Religion, which, like that on Nature, is a fine specimen of Mill's philosophical style, is the sufficiency of the Religion of Humanity and its superiority to all but the best of the supernatural religions. 'Let it be remembered that if individual life is short, the life of the human species is not short; its indefinite duration is practically equivalent to endlessness; and being combined with indefinite capability of improvement, it offers to the imagination and sympathies a large enough object to satisfy any reasonable demand for grandeur of aspiration.'[2] 'The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognized as of the highest excellence, and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire. This condition is fulfilled by the Religion of Humanity in as eminent a degree, and in as high a sense, as by the supernatural religions even in their best manifestations, and far more so than in any of their others.'[3] The characteristic tendency of supernaturalism is to arrest the development not only of the intellectual but also of the moral nature. Its appeal is to self-interest rather than to disinterested and ideal motives; and like the intuitional theory of ethics, it stereotypes morality. The special appeal of supernatural religion is to our sense of the mystery which circumscribes our little knowledge; but the same appeal is made, and the same

[1] *Essays on Religion*, p. 28. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 106. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

service to the imagination rendered, by Poetry. 'Religion and poetry address themselves, at least in one of their aspects, to the same part of the human constitution: they both supply the same want, that of ideal conceptions grander and more beautiful than we see realized in the prose of human life.'[1] 'The idealization of our earthly life, the cultivation of a high conception of what it may be made,' is 'capable of supplying a poetry, and, in the best sense of the word, a religion, equally fitted to exalt the feelings, and (with the same aid from education) still better calculated to ennoble the conduct, than any belief respecting the unseen powers.'[2] Yet 'he to whom ideal good, and the progress of the world towards it, are already a religion' may find consolation and encouragement in the belief that he is 'a fellow-labourer with the Highest, a fellow-combatant in the great strife; contributing his little, which by the aggregation of many like himself becomes much, towards that progressive ascendancy, and ultimately complete triumph of good over evil, which history points to, and which this doctrine teaches us to regard as planned by the Being to whom we owe all the benevolent contrivance we behold in Nature. Against the moral tendency of this creed no possible objection can lie: it can produce on whoever can succeed in believing it, no other than an ennobling effect.'[3]

The essay on Theism bears evidence, in the imperfection of its construction and the inferiority of its style, to its lack of the author's final revision. The argument for a First Cause is condemned, on the ground that there is a permanent element in nature itself; 'as far as anything can be concluded from human experience, Force has all the attributes of a thing eternal and uncreated.'[4] The argument from Design is found to be less unsatisfactory. The principle of the survival of the fittest, while not inconsistent with Creation, 'would greatly attenuate the evidence for it.' But 'leaving this remarkable speculation to whatever fate the progress of discovery

[1] *Essays on Religion*, p. 103.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 105.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 117.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

may have in store for it,' Mill concludes that 'it must be allowed that, in the present state of our knowledge, the adaptations in Nature afford a large balance of probability in favour of creation by intelligence.'[1] On the other hand, 'it is not too much to say that every indication of Design in the Kosmos is so much evidence against the Omnipotence of the Designer.'[2] The necessity of contrivance, or the adaptation of means to ends, implies limitation of power in the agent. As to Immortality, there is 'a total absence of evidence on either side.' Miracles, while not impossible, are extremely improbable, even on the hypothesis of a supernatural Being. The reasonable attitude, on all these questions, is that of scepticism, as distinguished alike from belief and from atheism. 'If we are right in the conclusions to which we have been led by the preceding inquiry, there is evidence, but insufficient for proof, and amounting only to one of the lower degrees of probability. The indication given by such evidence as there is, points to the creation, not indeed of the universe, but of the present order of it, by an Intelligent Mind, whose power over the materials was not absolute, whose love for his creatures was not his sole actuating inducement, but who nevertheless desired their good.'[3] Where belief is not warranted, however, hope is permissible, and the imagination need not be controlled by purely rational considerations. 'To me it seems that human life, small and confined as it is, and as, considered merely in the present, it is likely to remain even when the progress of material and moral improvement may have freed it from the greater part of its present calamities, stands greatly in need of any wider range and greater height of aspiration for itself and its destination, which the exercise of imagination can yield to it without running counter to the evidence of fact; and that it is a part of wisdom to make the most of any, even small, probabilities on this subject, which furnish imagination with any footing to support itself upon.'[4] Above all, the

[1] *Essays on Religion*, p. 174.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 176.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 242.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

conception of a morally perfect being, and of his approbation, is an inspiration for the moral life which would be sorely missed, and Christianity has provided us with an 'ideal representative and guide of humanity'; 'nor, even now, would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.'[1] 'The feeling of helping God' in the struggle with evil is 'excellently fitted to aid and fortify that real, though purely human religion, which sometimes calls itself the Religion of Humanity and sometimes that of Duty,' and which 'is destined, with or without supernatural sanctions, to be the religion of the Future.'

Bain's two great psychological treatises, *The Senses and the Intellect* (1855) and *The Emotions and the Will* (1859), form the connecting link between the Associationism of the Mills and the scientific and evolutionary philosophy of Herbert Spencer. Their importance is fully acknowledged both by J. S. Mill and by Spencer. Mill, referring to a statement by M'Cosh that Bain had 'elaborated into a minute system the general statements scattered throughout Mr. Mill's *Logic*,' says: 'Mr. Bain did not stand in need of any predecessor except our common precursors, and has taught much more to me, on these subjects, than there is any reasonable probability that I can have taught to him.'[2] 'Estimated as a means to higher results,' says Spencer, 'Mr. Bain's work is of great value. . . . We repeat, that as a natural history of the mind, we believe it to be the best yet produced. It is a most valuable collection of carefully elaborated materials. Perhaps we cannot better express our sense of its worth than by saying that to those who hereafter give to this branch of psychology a thoroughly scientific organisation, Mr. Bain's book will be indispensable.'[3] When we compare

[1] *Essays on Religion*, p. 255.
[2] *Examination of Hamilton*, p. 274, note.
[3] *Essays*, ed. 1863, i. 121 (quoted by Ribot, *English Psychology*, p. 250).

these treatises with the earlier works of the Scottish philosophers, and even with that of James Mill, we cannot help remarking that they are scientific in a sense in which those were not. It is not merely that Bain is the first to use effectively the physiological method, referring psychological phenomena to their correlates in nerve and brain, but that he adopts throughout the genetic, if not the evolutionary method, tracing the complex to the simple and the later to the earlier, and thus explaining, where his predecessors had been content to do little more than describe, the phenomena of the mental life. When we add to this scientific purpose, resolutely held to throughout the investigation, his remarkable gift of lucid exposition and of apposite and telling illustration, we can understand the immense influence which Bain exerted as a teacher upon his pupils and as a writer upon his successors in this field of scientific inquiry. At the same time, it is to be remarked that it is rather in the sphere of scientific psychology than in that of speculative philosophy that his influence is to be traced. In ethics, on the other hand, the importance of his contribution to the Utilitarian theory is not to be underestimated.

In psychology Bain is a convinced Associationist, and he applies himself with all the ardour of the Mills to trace to their common source in experience and association all those ideas which others have held to be intuitive, and have attributed to some original faculty of the mind. His statement and illustration of the laws of association is not merely much fuller than those given by his predecessors, and applied to the emotional and volitional as carefully as to the intellectual life; it also shows a clearer apprehension of the nature of the process. His definite differentiation of Similarity from Contiguity, as an independent and equally important principle of Association, adds materially to the value of Association as a psychological principle, while his sense of the limitations of its validity saves him from the errors into which its earlier advocates had been betrayed. Apart from the doctrine of Association, his chief contributions to psychology are his

differentiation of the muscular and organic senses from the traditional five senses of earlier psychology; his insistence upon the 'Law of Relativity,' or the presence of discrimination, or the apprehension of difference, as well as similarity, and of retentiveness as the condition of both, in the most rudimentary forms of knowledge; his recognition of spontaneity, or 'random movement,' as the basis of the later purposive movements which are the elementary form of Will; his doctrine of the instinctive origin of all the higher forms of mentality; and his explanation of Belief, not in terms of Association, but in its relation to action and emotion.

The account of Belief is hardly less important from a metaphysical than from a psychological point of view. The crucial point is the bearing of action upon belief. 'Preparedness to act upon what we affirm is admitted on all hands to be the sole, the genuine, the unmistakable criterion of belief.'[1] We believe in an 'order of nature,' or a 'course of things' as a series of means to ends, which we proceed to realise by our choice of the means. 'The first germ and perennial substance of the state,' however, is 'primitive credulity,' or an innate tendency to believe everything indiscriminately, which Bain contrasts with that 'acquired scepticism' which is the result of the shock of contradiction, the thwarting of our expectations, by experience of the actual order of nature. We start with 'an overweening belief in the uniformity of nature,' which is gradually checked and educated by our growing experience. The great lesson of experience is that the warrant of belief or disbelief is to be found not in the mere frequency or rarity of the uniformities, but in their 'comparative frequency.' The function of experience and repetition is not to originate, but to confirm or correct the original tendency to belief, strengthening or weakening it according to the number and the nature of the agreements and contradictions respectively. We are thus enabled to correct the error of the Associationist explanation. 'When James Mill

[1] *Emotions and Will*, 3rd ed., p. 505.

represented Belief as the offspring of "inseparable association," he put the stress upon the wrong point. If two things have been incessantly conjoined in our experience, they are inseparably associated, and we believe that the one will be followed by the other; but the inseparable association follows the number of repetitions, the belief follows the absence of contradiction. We have a stronger mental association between "Diana of the Ephesians" and the epithet "great," than probably existed in the minds of Diana's own worshippers; yet they believed in the assertion, and we do not.'[1] As against J. S. Mill's view that the belief in the ideas of memory, as distinguished from those of imagination, is inexplicable, Bain holds that 'the principal distinction between Memory and Imagination lies in the *setting* of the respective ideas. Ideas of Memory have a place in the continuous chain of our remembered life; ideas of Imagination correspond to nothing in that chain; or rather, they are consciously combined from different ideas of Memory taken out of their Memory-setting, and aggregated under a special motive.'[2] He also traces with great skill the influence of emotion upon belief, and the 'power of the Will, as representing our likings and dislikings, to shape our creeds.'[3]

Closely connected with his general theory of Belief is the account which Bain gives of our belief in the material or external world, or, more strictly, of the objective as distinguished from the subjective element in consciousness. The material or external object is not the product of passive sensation, or of the influence of the non-ego upon the ego; an object out of relation to the subject, matter independent of mind, is a contradiction in terms. The real source of belief in the object is the forth-putting of energy by the subject. 'The sum total of all the occasions for putting forth active energy, or for conceiving this as possible to be put forth, is our external world.'[4] 'The feeling that is the deepest foundation of

[1] *Emotions and Will*, p. 527.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 534.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 525.
[4] *Senses and Intellect*, 3rd ed., p. 377.

our notion of externality' is the feeling of resistance, the 'mixed state, produced through reacting upon a sensation of touch by a muscular exertion.' This feeling of resistance, or 'expended muscular energy,' is the objective side of consciousness, as sensation wholly passive is its subjective side. 'The doctrine of an external and independent world' is a 'generalisation or abstraction grounded on our particular experiences, summing up the past, and predicting the future.'[1] The doctrine of Natural Realism is a species of that metaphysical Realism which attributes reality to the abstract universals, rather than to the concrete particulars of our experience from which they are derived.

While accepting the general standpoint of Utilitarianism in ethics, Bain works out the theory, in several points, much more carefully and consistently than J. S. Mill. He definitely rejects the view that the only possible motive of action is desire of our own pleasure. 'It seems to me that we must face the seeming paradox—that there are, in the human mind, motives that pull against our happiness.'[2] Disinterested and purely altruistic action, he holds, is not merely possible but normal, and virtue in its highest form is always disinterested. He is thus enabled to explain that 'conscience' which had for Mill remained inexplicable. Distinguishing the dutiful or obligatory from the virtuous or optional, he explains the former in terms of social penalties, the latter in terms of social rewards. 'The powers that impose the obligatory sanction are Law and Society, or the community acting through the Government by public judicial acts, and, apart from the Government, by the unofficial expressions of disapprobation and the exclusion from social good offices.'[3] The result of this social pressure is not merely the enforcement of the type of conduct socially approved, but the development, in the mind of the individual who is subjected to it, of the sense of duty, or conscience, which adds its own pressure to that which

[1] *Senses and Intellect*, p. 382. [2] *Emotions and Will*, p. 296.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 264.

comes from without. Conscience is thus 'an ideal resemblance of public authority, growing up in the individual mind, and working to the same end,'[1] 'an imitation within ourselves of the government without us.'[2] The sentiment of fear is gradually supplemented and superseded by 'a sentiment of love or respect towards the person of the superior,' until 'the young mind is able to take notice of the use and meaning of the prohibitions imposed upon it, and to approve of the end intended by them.' 'All that we understand by the authority of conscience, the sentiment of obligation, the feeling of right, the sting of remorse—can be nothing else than so many modes of expressing the acquired aversion and dread towards certain actions associated in the mind with the consequences now stated. . . .The dread of anticipated evil operating to restrain before the fact, and the pain realized after the act has been performed, are perfectly intelligible products of the education of the mind under a system of authority, and of experience of the good and evil consequences of actions.'[3] Out of the 'slavish conscience' of the child is thus developed the 'citizen conscience' of the adult, which has regard to 'the intent and meaning of the law, and not to the mere fact of its being prescribed by some power';[4] the individual conscience becomes independent of social rewards and punishments. 'We may by rewards and punishments make men perform their social duties; but such performance is by that fact rendered self-regarding. To obtain virtue in its highest purity, its noblest hue, we have to abstain from the mention of both punishment and reward.' This is true even of the theological sanctions: 'in the thunders of eternal reward and punishment, there cannot be heard the still small voice of a purely disinterested motive.'[5]

[1] *Emotions and Will*, p. 264. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 285. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 286.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 288. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

2. *Evolutionism* : *Herbert Spencer*

It remained for a thinker more ambitious than Bain, and more profoundly impressed with the philosophical significance of the principle of Evolution, to develop a philosophy of evolution, to attempt the construction of a system of the sciences, or the complete unification of knowledge, by the discovery in each of the special sciences of a single identical phenomenon, that of Evolution. This task was attempted by Spencer, whose philosophy, in spite of its agnostic basis, is therefore systematic in a sense in which that of none of his English predecessors, with the possible exception of Hobbes, can be so described. 'He alone,' says Lewes, 'of all British thinkers has organised a system of philosophy.' He attempts to construct that system of the sciences which Bacon did little more than sketch as an ideal to be realised through the labours of his successors. His philosophy is systematic in a sense in which hardly any other philosophy can be so described. As Professor Dewey has said, 'The other systems are such after all more or less *ex post facto*. In themselves they have the unity of the *development* of a single mind, rather than of a predestined *planned achievement*. They are systems somewhat in and through retrospect. Their completeness owes something to the mind of the onlooker gathering together parts which have grown up more or less separately and in response to felt occasions, to particular problems. . . . But Spencer's system *was* a system from the very start. It was a system in conception, not merely in issue.'[1] Spencer himself speaks of the operation in him of 'the architectonic instinct, the love of system-building, as it would be called in less complimentary language. During these thirty years it has been a source of frequent elation to see each division, and each part of a division, working out into congruity with the rest—to see each com-

[1] *Phil. Rev.*, xiii. 160.

ponent fitting into its place, and helping to make a harmonious whole.'[1]

Hardly less remarkable than Spencer's intellectual ambition is his intellectual independence, what Professor Dewey calls his 'singular immunity from all intellectual contagion,' what he himself notes as 'an unusually small tendency to be affected by others' thoughts.' 'It seems as though the fabric of my conclusions had in all cases to be developed from within—refused to be built, and insisted upon growing. Material which could be taken in and organised, or re-organised, so as to form part of a coherent structure in course of elaboration, there was always a readiness to receive. But ideas and sentiments of alien kinds, or unorganisable kinds, were, if not rejected, yet accepted with indifference and soon dropped away.'[2] Even the great classics of philosophical literature were, if not unread, merely dipped into, and cast aside as soon as it became clear, as it must very soon have become in most cases, that their point of view was 'alien' to Spencer's own modes of thought. Plato's dialogues, for example, he found it impossible to read. 'Time after time I have attempted to read, now this dialogue and now that, and have put it down in a state of impatience with the indefiniteness of the thinking and the mistaking of words for things: being repelled also by the rambling form of the argument. . . . When I again took up the dialogues, I contemplated them as works of art, and put them aside in greater exasperation than before.'[3] 'All through my life Locke's *Essay* had been before me on my father's shelves, but I had never taken it down; or, at any rate, I have no recollection of having ever read a page of it.' Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* fared no better. 'This I commenced reading, but did not go far. The doctrine that Time and Space are "nothing but" subjective forms —pertain exclusively to consciousness and have nothing beyond consciousness answering to them—I rejected at once and absolutely; and, having done so, went no

[1] *Autobiog.*, ii. 450. [2] *Ibid.*, i. 242. [3] *Ibid.*, ii. 442.

further.'[1] He adds that 'whenever, in later years, I have taken up Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, I have similarly stopped short after rejecting its primary proposition.'

In March, 1860, Spencer issued his prospectus of the Synthetic Philosophy, under the title 'A System of Philosophy,' to consist of the following parts: (1) First Principles, containing the statement of the fundamental principles of the system, and giving the system itself in outline and in all its generality; (2) passing over the application of these First Principles to Inorganic Nature, as being of less immediate importance and making the scheme impracticably extensive, the Principles of Biology; (3) the Principles of Psychology; (4) the Principles of Sociology; (5) the Principles of Morality, the contents of which had been in part anticipated in *Social Statics*. Ambitious as the programme is, it was fully carried out, the *First Principles* appearing in 1862, and the last volume of the *Principles of Sociology* in 1896.

Tracing the genesis of our 'ultimate scientific ideas,' Spencer finds the universal form of thought in Relation: it is because to think is to relate, that we cannot know Absolute Reality. Time and space are derived by abstraction from the two kinds of relation, sequence and co-existence. 'The abstract of all sequences is Time. The abstract of all co-existences is Space. . . . Time and Space are generated, as other abstracts are generated from other concretes: the only difference being, that the organisation of experiences has, in these cases, been going on throughout the entire evolution of intelligence.'[2] The conception of Matter has a similarly empirical origin. 'Our conception of Matter, reduced to its simplest shape, is that of co-existent positions that offer resistance; as contrasted with our conception of Space, in which the co-existent positions offer no resistance.' As consisting of co-existing positions, Matter is also extended; but 'of these two inseparable elements, the resistance is primary,

[1] *Autobiog.*, i. 252.

[2] *First Principles*, p. 164.

and the extension secondary. Occupied extension, or Body, being distinguished in consciousness from unoccupied extension, or Space, by its resistance, this attribute must clearly have precedence in the genesis of the idea.'[1] The idea of Motion is derived from our earliest experiences of force. 'Out of this primitive conception of Motion, the adult conception of it is developed simultaneously with the development of the conceptions of Space and Time: all three being evolved from the more multiplied and varied impressions of muscular tension and objective resistance. Motion, as we know it, is thus traceable, in common with the other ultimate scientific ideas, to experiences of force.'[2]

Force is thus seen to be 'the ultimate of ultimates.' 'Though Space, Time, Matter, and Motion, are apparently all necessary data of intelligence, yet a psychological analysis . . . shows us that these are either built up of, or abstracted from, experiences of Force.'[3] As to the relation of 'this undecomposable mode of consciousness' to 'the Power manifested to us through phenomena,' Spencer does not seem clear. 'Force, as we know it,' he says, 'can be regarded only as a certain conditioned effect of the Unconditioned Cause—as the relative reality indicating to us an Absolute Reality by which it is immediately produced.' The doctrine to which we are brought is neither realism nor idealism, but 'transfigured realism.' 'Getting rid of all complications, and contemplating pure Force, we are irresistibly compelled by the relativity of our thought, to vaguely conceive some unknown force as the correlative of the known force. Noumenon and phenomenon are here presented in their primordial relation as two sides of the same change, of which we are obliged to regard the last as no less real than the first.'[4] But at the end of the chapter on 'the persistence of force' he says: 'The force of which we assert persistence is that Absolute Force of which we are indefinitely conscious as the neces-

[1] *First Principles*, p. 166.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 168.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 169.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

sary correlate of the force we know. By the Persistence of Force we really mean the persistence of some Cause which transcends our knowledge and conception. In asserting it we assert an Unconditioned Reality, without beginning or end. . . . The sole truth which transcends experience by underlying it, is thus the Persistence of Force. This being the basis of experience, must be the basis of any scientific organisation of experiences. To this an ultimate analysis brings us down; and on this a rational synthesis must build up.'[1]

From the persistence of force follows the persistence of relations among forces, or the uniformity of law. 'The general conclusion that there exist constant connexions among phenomena, ordinarily regarded as an inductive conclusion only, is really a conclusion deducible from the ultimate datum of consciousness' [the persistence of force].[2] A further consequence is the transformation and equivalence of all forces. This holds, according to Spencer, of the relation of physical to mental forces, no less than in the case of merely physical forces. 'The law of metamorphosis, which holds among the physical forces, holds equally between them and the mental forces. Those modes of the Unknowable which we call motion, heat, light, chemical affinity, etc., are alike transformable into each other, and into those modes of the Unknowable which we distinguish as sensation, emotion, thought: these, in their turns, being directly or indirectly retransformable into the original shapes.'[3] Finally the direction of motion is 'that of the greatest force,' or that of the least resistance; and the rhythm of motion, or the doctrine of the alternate action and reaction of forces, follows from 'the co-existence everywhere of antagonistic forces.'

We have not yet, however, reached the synthesis or complete unification of knowledge in which philosophy consists; we have not yet formulated the law of the cosmic process as a whole. All these are 'analytical

[1] *First Principles*, p. 192. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 195. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

truths'; what we are seeking for is 'a universal synthesis.' 'Having seen that matter is indestructible, motion continuous, and force persistent—having seen that forces are everywhere undergoing transformation, and that motion, always following the line of least resistance, is invariably rhythmic, it remains to discover the similarly invariable formula expressing the combined consequences of the actions thus separately formulated.'[1] This comprehensive 'law of the continuous redistribution of matter and motion' is the Law of Evolution; and it is reached first inductively, from a study of the actual phenomena, then deductively, as an implication of the persistence of force.

In every evolving phenomenon we find three characteristic features—integration, differentiation, and determination: a change from incoherence to coherence, from homogeneity to heterogeneity, from indefiniteness to definiteness. First, there is an integration of matter and accompanying dissipation of motion. This is illustrated by the evolution of the solar system from the primitive nebular mass, of the plant or animal from the elements which enter into the composition of its body, as well as by the evolution of the State from the looser combinations of tribal communities and by 'the integrations of advancing Language, Science, and Art.'[2] Secondly, there is a growing differentiation of structure, alike in the parts and in the whole, as we see in the differentiation of the several planets from one another, in the evolution of the different species of plant and animal, in the differentiation of structure and function within the animal body as well as in the social organism and in the psychological life of man. Thirdly, there is a change from confusion to order, or from the indefinite to the definite, as the same examples show. Accompanying these changes we find a parallel transformation of the retained motion. The complete definition of Evolution, therefore, is: 'Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of

[1] *First Principles*, p. 276. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 319.

motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation.'[1]

Is it possible to exhibit the law of Evolution, thus inductively established, as a result of deductive demonstration; to show that 'the redistribution of matter and motion must everywhere take place in those ways, and produce those traits, which celestial bodies, organisms, societies, alike display?'[2] Can we deduce the phenomena of evolution from the Persistence of Force? In the first place, Spencer replies, the transition from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous is an obvious consequence of 'the instability of the homogeneous.' Secondly, 'action and re-action being equal and opposite, it follows that in differentiating the parts on which it falls in unlike ways, the incident force must itself be correspondingly differentiated. Instead of being, as before, a uniform force, it must thereafter be a multiform force—a group of dissimilar forces.'[3] This he calls the law of 'the multiplication of effects,' or 'the production of many changes by one cause.' While these two laws explain the nature of Evolution as a movement from homogeneity to heterogeneity, they do not explain it as a movement from the incoherent to the coherent, from the indefinite to the definite. But in the case of any aggregate of unlike units, or groups of units, these are, by the indiscriminate action of any force upon them, 'separated from each other—segregated into minor aggregates, each consisting of units that are severally like each other and unlike those of the other minor aggregates.'[4] And 'other things being equal, the definiteness of the separation is in proportion to the definiteness of the difference between the units.'[5]

The tendency of Evolution being to equilibrium, the attainment of this state constitutes its 'impassable limit.' 'The re-distributions of matter that go on around us

[1] *First Principles*, p. 396. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 398. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 431.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 461. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 463.

are ever being brought to conclusions by the dissipation of the motions which effect them.'[1] The universal co-existence of antagonistic forces results not merely in the rhythmic decomposition of every force into divergent forces, but also in the 'ultimate establishment of a balance.' 'Every motion being motion under resistance is continually suffering deductions; and these unceasing deductions finally result in the cessation of the motion.'[2] Dissolution is thus the inevitable complement of Evolution. 'When Evolution has run its course—when the aggregate has at length parted with its excess of motion, and habitually receives as much from its environment as it habitually loses—when it has reached that equilibrium in which its changes end; it thereafter remains subject to all actions in its environment which may increase the quantity of motion it contains, and which, in the lapse of time, are sure, either slowly or suddenly, to give its parts such excess of motion as will cause disintegration.'[3] This rhythmic law holds of 'the entire process of things, as displayed in the aggregate of the visible universe,' as well as of each smaller aggregate. 'And thus there is suggested the conception of a past during which there have been successive Evolutions analogous to that which is now going on; and a future during which successive other such Evolutions may go on—ever the same in principle but never the same in concrete result.'[4]

Spencer's ultimate interest in the systematic treatment of all problems from the point of view of Evolution was, according to his own account, practical rather than

[1] *First Principles*, p. 483. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 484. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 519.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 537. The extreme vagueness and unintelligibility of the above statement of Spencer's views is not to be set down to the exigencies of condensation; it is inherent in the 'System.' The serious student cannot but feel, with Riehl, that Spencer's 'law of development is merely a play with analogies, or at best a mere schematic formula, which does not come in contact with phenomena to explain them, but only describes a superficial similarity between different kinds of natural processes' (*Science and Metaphysics*, Eng. trans., p. 112).

theoretical. 'The whole system,' he says in the *Autobiography*,[1] 'was at the outset, and has ever continued to be, a basis for a right rule of life, individual and social.' In the Preface to the *Data of Ethics*, he says: 'This last part of the task [the Principles of Morality] it is, to which I regard all the preceding parts as subsidiary. Written as far back as 1842, my first essay, consisting of letters on *The Proper Sphere of Government*, vaguely indicated what I conceived to be certain general principles of right and wrong in political conduct; and from that time onwards my ultimate purpose, lying behind all proximate purposes, has been that of finding for the principles of right and wrong in conduct at large, a scientific basis.'

His earliest work, *Social Statics*, was devoted to the fundamental questions of ethics and politics; and the only essential difference between it and the later *Principles of Ethics* is that in the former he accepts, in a somewhat restricted form, the doctrine of a 'moral sense,' which he definitely repudiates in the latter.[2] In the earlier work he condemns the doctrine of Expediency on account of its empirical and unscientific character. In the later he insists that 'empirical utilitarianism is but a transitional form to be passed through on the way to rational utilitarianism'; that 'the utilitarianism which recognises only the principles of conduct reached by induction is but preparatory to the utilitarianism which deduces these principles from the processes of life as carried on under established conditions of existence.'[3] Or, as he puts it in his letter to Mill, partly republished in the chapter referred to, 'The view for which I contend is, that Morality properly so-called—the science of right conduct—has for its object to determine *how* and *why* certain modes of conduct are detrimental, and certain other modes beneficial. These good and bad results cannot be accidental, but must be necessary consequences of the constitution of things; and I conceive it to be the business of Moral Science

[1] *Autobiog.*, ii. 314.
[2] *Principles of Ethics*, pt. ii. sect. 191.
[3] *Data of Ethics*, ch. iv

to deduce, from the laws of life and the conditions of existence, what kinds of actions necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kinds to produce unhappiness. Having done this, its deductions are to be recognised as laws of conduct; and are to be conformed to irrespective of a direct estimation of happiness or misery.'[1]

Alike in the earlier and in the later work the standpoint of scientific ethics is identified with that of the ideal or completely evolved social state. As the geometrician deals with the ideally straight line, 'so likewise is it with the philosophical moralist. He treats solely of the *straight* man. He determines the properties of the straight man; describes how the straight man comports himself; shows in what relationship he stands to other straight men; shows how a community of straight men is constituted. Any deviation from strict rectitude he is obliged wholly to ignore. It cannot be admitted into his premises without vitiating all his conclusions. A problem in which a *crooked* man forms one of the elements is insoluble by him.'[2] A distinction is drawn, however, between two branches of social philosophy, statics and dynamics, 'the first treating of the equilibrium of a perfect society, the second of the forces by which society is advanced towards perfection'; [3] and progress is defined as gradual adaptation to the conditions, especially the social conditions, or gradual approximation to the perfect social state, in which the individual acts as a member of the social organism. In the *Data of Ethics* the same distinction is described as that between Absolute and Relative Ethics. 'There exists an ideal code of conduct formulating the behaviour of the completely adapted man in the completely evolved society. Such a code is that here called Absolute Ethics as distinguished from Relative Ethics—a code the injunctions of which are alone to be considered as absolutely right in contrast with those that are relatively right or least wrong; and which, as a system of ideal conduct,

[1] See Note, p. 297. [2] *Social Statics*, p. 57. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 409.

is to serve as a standard for our guidance in solving, as well as we can, the problems of real conduct.'[1]

Such a deductive or rational ethics must be a system developed from a first principle. This first principle is, in both works, identified with Justice, in the sense of the equal right of every individual to act as he likes, so long as he does not interfere with the same liberty on the part of other individuals; and this principle is regarded, in *Social Statics*, as an intuition or 'instinct of personal rights.' Although Spencer endeavours, in the *Principles*, to derive this from 'animal justice,' it is in reality, as Professor Albee points out, the antithesis of the latter, and is a deduction from the eighteenth-century individualism in which Spencer so devoutly believed rather than from Evolutionism.[2] As for the other two principles,—Prudence, and Beneficence, negative and positive, Spencer accepts the 'empirical utilitarian' account in both works, and in the Preface, subsequently withdrawn, to the Part of the *Principles* which treats of them he confesses that 'the Doctrine of Evolution has not furnished guidance to the extent I had hoped. Most of the conclusions, drawn empirically, are such as right feelings, enlightened by cultivated intelligence, have already sufficed to establish.'

On the other hand, we find in the *Data of Ethics* an interesting attempt to exhibit the biological significance of pleasure and the conciliation which the evolution of human conduct gradually effects between egoism and altruism; to give an evolutionary interpretation of the sense of duty as the survival in consciousness of the various pre-moral controls, political, religious, and social, which gradually gives place to the sense of the intrinsic authoritativeness of the higher, or more developed feelings over the lower, or simpler and less developed, as guides of conduct; and finally to reconcile intuitionism and empiricism, in ethics as in metaphysics, by the distinction between the individual and the racial point of view. This last position is clearly stated in the following

[1] *Data of Ethics*, p. 275.
[2] *History of English Utilitarianism*, pp. 342, 356.

passage from Spencer's letter to Mill.[1] 'Corresponding to the fundamental propositions of a developed Moral Science, there have been, and still are, developing in the race certain fundamental moral intuitions; and . . . though these moral intuitions are the results of accumulated experiences of Utility, gradually organised and inherited, they have come to be quite independent of conscious experience. Just in the same way that I believe the intuition of space, possessed by any living individual, to have arisen from organised and consolidated experiences of all antecedent individuals who bequeathed to him their slowly-developed nervous organisations—just as I believe that this intuition, requiring only to be made definite and completed by personal experiences, has practically become a form of thought, apparently quite independent of experience; so do I believe that the experiences of utility organised and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition—certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility.'

The individualism which underlies his account of Justice becomes explicit enough when Spencer comes to deal with the problem of the State. In spite of his belief in the solidarity of the interests of the individual and those of society, and his persistent use of the term 'social organism' in *Social Statics*, the antithesis between the State and the individual is for him absolute. His jealousy of State-interference with the liberty of the individual is greater even than Mill's. The State, he holds, is not the creator of rights: these are 'natural,' and the State's only legitimate function is to protect them. It is itself a necessary evil, incidental to the transitional stage which we have now reached on our way to that complete harmony of individual and social interests which will supersede it.

[1] Quoted in *Data of Ethics*, p. 123.

We are 'advancing from the one extreme, in which the State is everything and the individual nothing, to the other extreme, in which the individual is everything and the State nothing,'[1] from the completely military to the completely industrial type of social organisation. The State is indispensable 'during man's apprenticeship to the social state'; and, here as elsewhere, fitness for one function implies unfitness for others. But not only is the State unfit for any other function than that of protection, its attempt to do more is an interference with nature and an invasion of the sacred rights of the individual. On these grounds Spencer condemns the Poor-Law and National Education, as well as all interferences with religion and commerce. That he did not abate the rigour of these views in later life is seen in the essays republished from the *Contemporary Review* under the title *The Man versus the State* (1884).

Sufficient quotations have been given to enable the reader to judge of the merits and defects of Spencer's style. Its one merit is its clearness and precision; to this all other qualities are deliberately sacrificed. It is hard, technical, dry, entirely lacking in distinction and individuality. When he becomes impassioned, as he not seldom does when dealing with a practical question, he lapses into mere popular declamation, and the effect is decidedly incongruous. His own characterisation of his style is very just. 'I have always felt a wish to make both the greater arguments, and the smaller arguments composing them, finished and symmetrical. In so far as giving coherence and completeness is concerned, I have generally satisfied my ambition; but I have fallen short of it in respect of literary form. The æsthetic sense has in this always kept before me an ideal which I could never reach. Though my style is lucid, it has, as compared with some styles, a monotony that displeases me. There is a lack of variety in its verbal forms and

[1] *Social Statics*, p. 435.

in its larger components, and there is a lack of vigour in its phrases.'[1]

NOTE.

In the *Methods of Ethics*, published in 1874, Henry Sidgwick attempts to rationalise Utilitarianism by basing it upon Intuitionism. Distinguishing carefully between 'philosophical' and 'dogmatic' Intuitionism, he argues that the moral laws of the ordinary conscience, if taken as possessing absolute validity, lead to confusion and mutual conflict. Their practical is no measure of their theoretical value; and Common Sense itself, even in its unreflective form, does not attribute to them absolute validity, but adopts a critical and utilitarian attitude towards them, limiting their authority by a consideration of the consequences of obedience to them. This implicit utilitarianism of Common Sense suggests that the real conflict is not between Intuitionism and Utilitarianism, but between Intuitionism and Utilitarianism, on the one hand, and Egoism, the third 'method of ethics,' on the other. In Intuitionism, philosophically interpreted, Sidgwick finds the rational basis which is lacking in the Utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill. The three ultimate and self-evident principles which ought to regulate our choices of pleasure, or rather of the objects which reflection finds to be merely means to pleasure,—the ultimate good, are prudence, benevolence, and justice, dictating strict impartiality as between ourselves and others, as well as between the several parts or moments of our own individual experience. The final conflict between prudence and benevolence, between the claims of duty and those of self-interest, remains an insoluble 'dualism of the practical reason,' necessitating for its solution the theological postulate of a righteous government of the world, which shall compensate the individual for the sacrifices he has made in his devotion to duty.

[1] *Autobiography*, ii. 451.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE SCOTTISH PHILOSOPHY OF COMMON SENSE

1. *Natural Realism and the Relativity of Knowledge: Hamilton and Mansel*

It is difficult for us to understand the extraordinary and, we cannot but judge, exaggerated reputation which Hamilton achieved among his contemporaries and immediate successors. That reputation has been finally discredited for us by Mill's relentless *Examination* and Hutchison Stirling's still more caustic *Analysis* of the Hamiltonian philosophy. But apart from these criticisms, the actual contribution of Hamilton to philosophy is so slight that it fails to impress the present-day reader. It consists of two series of class lectures, hastily prepared during the first years of his tenure of the chair of logic and metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh, and re-delivered year after year without revision; of a few articles contributed to the *Reviews*; and of an edition of Reid with elaborate notes and excursus. So far as the substance of his philosophy can be gathered from these scattered sources, all that he really added to the accepted teaching of the Scottish school was the doctrine of the Relativity of Human Knowledge; and it is doubtless to his enunciation of this doctrine and the subsequent development of it by other thinkers that Hamilton's reputation is chiefly due. But the impression which he produced upon his contemporaries must also in no small measure be attributed to his reputation for philo-

sophical erudition. With the single exception of Bacon, no English philosopher before his time had produced this impression of learning; with the single exception of Reid, none had investigated the questions of philosophy in the light of the history of their previous discussion. Mill indeed finds in 'the enormous amount of time and mental vigour which he expended on mere philosophical erudition, leaving, it may be said, only the remains of his mind for the real business of thinking,' part of the explanation of Hamilton's failure to contribute more effectively to the solution of philosophical problems.[1] Yet even his erudition has been to some extent discredited. Apart from errors in points of detail, he often fails entirely to grasp the system or to appreciate the point of view of the several philosophers to whom he refers; he allows himself to quote isolated statements, apart from their context in the system as a whole. Mill thinks that Hamilton was better fitted for the task of the historian of philosophy than for that of philosophy itself; but he also points out that the gift which his actual work in this field displays is rather that of the philosophic annalist than that of the historian proper. Still we can understand that Hamilton's extensive and minute acquaintance with the history of philosophical opinion was calculated to make a much greater impression upon his contemporaries, to whom it was something new, than upon those who have been taught a higher standard of scholarship in philosophy. Something is also doubtless to be set down to his ability in the presentation of his views, especially in a polemical interest. 'What strength and nerve in his style,' remarks Masson. It is true that his style is much more technical than that of previous English philosophers; but this very quality may well have helped to impress his contemporaries with the scientific accuracy of his methods. Whatever be the explanation, the fact remains that Hamilton gave a new and a strong impulse to the study of philosophy in England; and it is rather as the originator

[1] *Examination of Hamilton*, p. 637.

of such an impulse than in virtue of the importance of his own contributions to the solution of its problems that his significance is to be found.

Hamilton's quarrel is not merely, like Reid's, with the scepticism of Hume and the 'ideal' or 'representative' theory of knowledge, of which it is the consequence, but also with the opposite type of philosophy, that absolute idealism or 'omniscience' which the German successors of Kant have developed out of the Kantian transcendentalism. To this he opposes the doctrine of phenomenalism or relativism which he regards as the true development of the 'critical' philosophy. But he at the same time reasserts Reid's doctrine of Natural Realism or Dualism, in opposition to what he calls Cosmothetic Idealism or Hypothetical Realism. Like Reid, he insists upon the distinction between the primary and the secondary qualities, regarding the former as objectively real and the latter as subjective modifications; like Reid, he appeals to our 'common sense,' or immediate 'consciousness' both of the ego and of the non-ego; like Reid, he signalises the distinction between sensation and perception. So far as this side of his philosophy is concerned, we have only to note the greater clearness with which he conceives the relation of philosophy to common sense and his indebtedness, even in this part of the argument, to Kant. 'Common Sense,' he says, 'is like Common Law. Each may be laid down as the general rule of decision; but in the one case it must be left to the jurist, in the other to the philosopher, to ascertain what are the contents of the rule; and though in both instances the common man may be cited as a witness, for the custom or the fact, in neither can he be allowed to officiate as advocate or as judge.'[1] This is very different from the appeal, so frequent in Reid, from the philosophers to the vulgar. The general position of Reid is further greatly modified by the adoption of the Kantian view of space and time as forms of perception[2]

[1] Reid's Works, ii. 752.
[2] Hamilton calls them inaccurately 'forms of thought.'

and of the general Kantian distinction between the conditions and the results of experience, between the *a priori*, or necessary, and the *a posteriori*, or contingent element in experience.

But it is on the other and negative side of the Hamiltonian doctrine, as the 'philosophy of the conditioned,' that the influence of Kant is of chief importance. The great lesson of Kant, as Hamilton conceives it, is the lesson of our ignorance, complete and incurable, of ultimate reality. The implication of that 'Copernican change of standpoint' which is the decisive factor in the Kantian theory of knowledge is that since, to be known, things must conform to the knowing mind and its ways of knowledge, they can never be known as they are in themselves, apart from the mind. To know is to relate things to the mind; it follows that the unrelated thing, the thing-in-itself, can never be known. We know only phenomena; that is, we do not, in the strict sense, know at all. The knowing subject, in the very act of knowing, weaves a veil which hides from its sight the object as it truly is: what we know is the subjective object, not the object as it is in itself. When we seek to know ourselves, we are involved in the same fatal circle of subjectivity and appearance; we know even ourselves only as we appear to ourselves, not as we are in ourselves. Hamilton identifies this agnosticism of Kant with the Lockian doctrine of the inscrutability of substance, material and spiritual: in both cases alike we know only the qualities, not the real substance. 'Mind and matter, as known or knowable, are only two different series of phenomena or qualities; mind and matter, as unknown and unknowable, are the two substances in which these two different series of phænomena or qualities are supposed to inhere. The existence of an unknown substance is only an inference we are compelled to make from the existence of known phænomena; and the distinction of two substances is only inferred from the seeming incompatibility of the two series of phænomena to coinhere in one.'[1] The source of our ignorance is

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, i. 138.

not so much the limitation of our faculties as the nature of knowledge itself. 'Were the number of our faculties coextensive with the modes of being—had we for each of these thousand modes a separate organ competent to make it known to us—still would our whole knowledge be, as it is at present, only of the relative. Of existence absolutely and in itself, we should then be as ignorant as we are now.'[1]

Mill and others find in this doctrine of Agnosticism the contradiction of Hamilton's own theory of Natural Realism; but though Hamilton's statements can easily be made to contradict one another, Masson's surmise is doubtless the true one, namely, that the theory of Natural Realism refers only to phenomenal or 'cosmological' reality, and is not therefore contradicted by the doctrine of the unknowableness of ultimate or 'ontological' reality. The real difficulty in the latter theory lies in the underlying conception of ultimate reality as the unconditioned, or unrelated, a conception which Hamilton develops with great explicitness in the article on 'The Philosophy of the Unconditioned.' Since to think is to condition, we cannot, he argues, know the Unconditioned. Whenever we make the attempt, we find that we have to choose between two contradictory propositions, both inconceivable, of which, according to the principle of excluded middle, one must be true. The unconditioned is either the Absolute or the Infinite, the unconditionally limited or the unconditionally unlimited. Which of these contradictories is true, we are in certain cases able, in other cases unable, to determine. In any case, for Hamilton as for Kant, the ground of decision between the contradictory alternatives is a moral one. For example, the fact of moral responsibility compels us to decide in favour of a first cause or absolute beginning of our own actions, and against an infinite series of causes. The absence of such grounds of decision between the rival interpretations of God, as the Unconditioned, condemns us to complete ignorance of the divine nature.

[1] *Lectures on Metaphysics*, i. 153.

Hamilton concludes, with Kant, that where knowledge is unattainable, belief is both possible and necessary; but instead of constructing, like Kant, a moral theology or a metaphysic of ethics, he trusts to Common Sense and Intuition, aided by supernatural Revelation, to assure us of those truths which lie beyond the sphere of knowledge.

The title of Mansel's famous Bampton Lectures (1858), 'The Limits of Religious Thought,' indicates the leading interest of the author in the Hamiltonian 'philosophy of the conditioned,' namely, its theological implications. He sets himself to undermine the rationalistic criticism of revealed theology by showing that the philosophy of the Infinite, on which it rests, is unattainable by man, whose knowledge is, by its very nature, limited to the finite. The true theology, he argues, is merely 'regulative' and practical, 'not 'speculative' or scientific. Religious intuition or instinct, belief as distinguished from knowledge, is the organ by which we apprehend God and our relation to Him. Our feeling of dependence suggests to us the power, our conviction of moral obligation the goodness, of God. Thus we form 'regulative ideas of the Deity, which are sufficient to guide our practice, but not to satisfy our intellect; which tell us, not what God is in Himself, but how He wills that we should think of Him.'[1] Mansel follows Butler in his contention that the divine government of the world is 'a scheme imperfectly comprehended,' and argues that we must be content with the apprehension of the analogy of the divine nature to our own, where knowledge in the strict sense is beyond our reach. We must rest satisfied with 'the convictions forced upon us by our religious and moral instincts.'[2] These convictions are at once incapable of rational justification and superior to it.

Mansel's argument for the limitation of human knowledge to the finite is essentially the same as that of Hamil-

[1] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 84. [2] *Metaphysics*, p. 375.

ton, but it is more clearly stated and somewhat expanded. He abandons Hamilton's view of the opposition of the absolute and the infinite, and finds the idea of the absolute to be not only inconceivable but self-contradictory. 'In my language *absolute* is not opposed to *incomplete*, but to *relative*, and means knowledge of an object as it is in itself, apart from its relation to human faculties.'[1] Hence 'a conception of the Deity, in His absolute existence, appears to involve a self-contradiction; for conception itself is a limitation, and a conception of the absolute Deity is a limitation of the illimitable.'[2] Conception or consciousness implies not merely, as Hamilton had argued, the relation of subject and object, but the distinction of one object from another, the succession and duration of these objects in time, and the attribution of spiritual qualities to a common subject or person. In all these respects a conception of the infinite is a contradiction in terms. Even the moral consciousness is limited to the relative, and acquaints us only with appearance, not with reality. 'If the standard of perfect and immutable morality is to be found only in the eternal nature of God, it follows that those conditions which prevent man from attaining to a knowledge of the infinite, as such, must also prevent him from attaining to more than a relative and phenomenal conception of morality.'[3] '*What* that Absolute Morality is, we are as unable to fix in any human conception, as we are to define the other attributes of the same Divine Nature.'[4] It follows that such a criticism of Revelation from the ethical point of view as we find in Kant, implying as it does the Kantian view of the absolute significance of our human morality, is entirely without warrant, and that we must accept without question the 'moral miracles' of Revelation. Elsewhere, however, Mansel seems to substitute for this strictly relativistic view of human morality an interpretation of ethical knowledge

[1] *Limits of Religious Knowledge* (Pref. to 4th ed.), p. xxx, note.
[2] *Metaphysics*, p. 298.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 386.
[4] *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 135.

as merely incomplete. 'Each principle of this kind,' he says, 'recommends itself to the minds of all who are capable of reflecting upon it, as true and irreversible so far as it goes; though it may represent but a limited portion of the truth, and be hereafter merged in some higher and more comprehensive formula.'[1] He departs, too, from the Hamiltonian doctrine at one notable point, admitting that, in spite of the impossibility of transcending the limits of consciousness, 'the self of consciousness is the true self.'[2] 'In Psychology it cannot in any sense be maintained that the real is that of which we are not conscious. My own consciousness is not merely the test of my real existence, but it actually constitutes it.'[3] The self, that is to say, is not, like other realities, an unknown substance which must be apprehended apart from its qualities, if it is to be known at all; personality is the one exception to the law of the inevitableness of human nescience. But the theological consequences of this exception are not developed by Mansel either in his *Metaphysics* or in his Bampton lectures.

2. *Agnosticism: Spencer and Huxley*

In the agnosticism of Herbert Spencer we find the doctrine of the relativity of knowledge, as proclaimed by Hamilton and Mansel, followed out to its extreme logical consequences, without any ulterior purpose of defending religious truth from the attacks of rationalism. Spencer, it is true, seeks, in the opening Book of his *First Principles*, to reconcile not only the various rival religions with one another, but also religion itself with science; but the very catholicity of his interest in religion, his complete indifference to the special claims of Christianity, clearly differentiates his enterprise from that of those who would magnify faith by belittling reason. In the doctrine of the unknowableness of ultimate reality he finds the principle

[1] *Metaphysics*, p. 388.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 368
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 354–5.

of reconciliation which he is seeking. 'If Religion and Science are to be reconciled, the basis of reconciliation must be this deepest, widest, and most certain of all facts—that the Power which the Universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable.'[1] The ultimate consequence of our scientific, no less than of our religious thought, is self-contradiction and the sense of utter mystery. Suppose the work of science completed, suppose 'the appearances, properties, and movements of things' to have been resolved into 'manifestations of Force in Space and Time,' it would still remain that 'Force, Space, and Time pass all understanding.' Thus the scientific thinker 'learns at once the greatness and the littleness of the human intellect—its power in dealing with all that comes within the range of experience; its impotence in dealing with all that transcends experience. He realises with a special vividness the utter incomprehensibleness of the simplest fact, considered in itself. He, more than any other, truly *knows* that in its ultimate essence nothing can be known.'[2] The inevitable inference from this universal failure to think out our conceptions, whether religious or scientific, is the merely symbolic value of our so-called 'knowledge.' 'Ultimate religious ideas and ultimate scientific ideas, alike turn out to be merely symbols of the actual, not cognitions of it.'[3] But while the only defensible philosophy is that which confines itself to the investigation of the laws or uniformities which characterise the phenomena to which our knowledge is limited, while philosophy differs from science merely as completely unified from partially unified knowledge of phenomena, and transcendental notions have no *rôle* to play in philosophic thought, there remains, as the basis of religious emotion, the indefinite consciousness, rather than the thought or idea, of the unknowable Reality which lies behind the phenomena of our experience, 'an indefinite consciousness of the unformed and unlimited,'[4] a compelling sense of the

[1] *First Principles*, p. 46.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 67.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 68.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

ultimate mysteriousness of the universe in which we find ourselves.

Huxley, to whom we owe the invention of the name 'agnosticism' as the antithesis of 'gnosticism,' finds the doctrine itself alike in Hume and Kant, though he learned it first from Hamilton.[1] 'The aim of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* is essentially the same as that of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, by which indeed Kant was led to develop that "critical philosophy" with which his name and fame are indisputably bound up: and, if the details of Kant's criticism differ from those of Hume, they coincide with them in their main result, which is the limitation of all knowledge of reality to the world of phenomena revealed to us by experience.'[2] But it is in the 'mitigated scepticism' or 'academical philosophy' of 'that prince of agnostics, David Hume,' rather even than in the Critical Philosophy of Kant, that he finds the classical statement of agnosticism; and this interpretation determines the entire presentation of Hume's philosophy in the notable volume which he contributed to the 'English Men of Letters' series.

While the name 'agnosticism' is a novelty of the nineteenth century, and the doctrine of nescience which it signifies is based by its advocates upon the results of Humian and Kantian speculation, as interpreted by Hamilton and Mansel, the doctrine itself is no novelty of the century. It is that doctrine of inverted empiricism with which we have already become familiar in the pages of Locke's *Essay* and with which Huxley explicitly connects his own teaching. Since experience is the only source from which the data of knowledge can be derived, it seems to Locke, as to Kant, to follow that we cannot know that which transcends experience, and therefore that we cannot know ultimate reality. Locke's unknown and unknowable 'substance' corresponds to

[1] See Essay on 'Agnosticism' in *Essays on Some Controverted Questions*, p. 353.
[2] *Hume*, in 'English Men of Letters,' p. 60.

Kant's unknown and unknowable 'thing-in-itself.' As Kant says that we know 'only phenomena' or appearances, Locke says that we know 'only qualities'; essential and substantial being we cannot know. For us reality, whether in Nature or in ourselves, must remain a mere 'something,' 'we know not what.' All that was left for the agnostics of the nineteenth century to do was to extend this view of the inscrutableness of reality to our knowledge of God, that is, to deduce the theological consequences which Locke had failed to draw from the general view of human knowledge which he had so emphatically stated.

3. *Return to the Characteristic Point of View of Scottish Philosophy: Calderwood, Martineau, Fraser*

It was doubtless the development of Hamilton's doctrine of Relativity by Mansel and Spencer that revealed to his ablest pupils the perilous inadequacies of the Philosophy of the Conditioned, and stimulated them to attempt the revision and correction of their master's theory of knowledge. The first sign of revolt was the publication of *The Philosophy of the Infinite*, by Henry Calderwood, afterwards professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh and a strenuous defender of intuitional ethics. In this work he contended that a 'negative notion' was 'no notion at all,' but a 'mental impossibility,' and that the removal of limitations does not annihilate the object of knowledge, though it may make it indefinite. Hamilton's 'Infinite' is 'a mere abstraction for which no one pleads either in existence or in thought.' We may have a finite or incomplete, yet real, knowledge of an infinite object. Nor is it possible to believe in that which we cannot conceive, that is, in some measure know. As to Hamilton's charge of 'imbecility' against our faculties of knowledge, Calderwood asks, in the spirit of Ferrier, 'Does it prove weakness of mind that we cannot think *nothing?* What a power of mind it would be to be able *to think nothing*—to think and yet not to think!'

Calderwood's concern was exclusively with the theological aspect of the Hamiltonian theory. It was reserved for Hamilton's successor in the chair of logic and metaphysics at Edinburgh, Alexander Campbell Fraser, who had also come under the influence of the great teacher, to develop a philosophy of his own on lines more characteristic of the Scottish Philosophy than those which Hamilton himself had followed, to interpret and explain the very doctrine of Nescience in a new way and to deduce from it consequences very different from those above described. Another thinker, slightly Fraser's senior, and though not a pupil of Hamilton, yet closely allied to the Scottish School in the tendencies of his thought and following indeed more closely the traditional lines of that school, is too impressive to be overlooked—James Martineau, for many years principal and professor in Manchester New College (now Manchester College, Oxford), and author of *Types of Ethical Theory* and *A Study of Religion*.

Both Martineau and Fraser, following the lead of Hamilton, subordinate the cosmological to the ontological and theological problem. Both insist upon the ethical aspect of Reality, or upon the reality of the ethical element in human experience, and its validity as affording the clue to the nature of God or ultimate Reality. The philosophy of both is an ethical theism, as opposed alike to an unethical atheism and to an unethical pantheism. Both contend for a spiritual interpretation of the universe, and find the key to the nature of the divine Spirit in the human. For both man is the measure of reality, but the whole man, the complete human personality, on its ethical as well as on its intellectual side. It is in this insistence upon the ethical element in the universe, as revealed in human experience, not less than in their insistence upon the validity of human knowledge, in spite of its inevitable incompleteness or finiteness, that these thinkers together represent the return to the more characteristic point of view of the Scottish Philosophy.

Martineau, as I have said, follows much more closely

than Fraser the traditional lines of the Scottish School; he is distinctly the less original and speculative thinker. This is true both of his metaphysical and of his ethical theory. In the former he reproduces the Natural Realism or Natural Dualism of Reid and Hamilton; in the latter he restates the Intuitionism of the school, with an interesting modification. Fraser, on the other hand, has been too profoundly influenced by that 'ideal theory' which was the *bête noire* of Reid, to attach much importance to the question of the independent reality of the material world; his interest is in 'spiritual realism' rather than in 'natural realism.' The consequence is that, while Martineau finds speculative satisfaction in a theory which shares the defects of the old mechanical and deistic theology of the eighteenth century, Fraser, under the combined influences of Coleridge and Berkeley, finds himself compelled to recognise the element of truth in the pantheistic theory, and to admit the immanence of God in the universe, in nature as well as in man. While both alike find pantheism finally unsatisfactory, and on the same ethical grounds, Martineau's philosophy is simply a revised version of the Natural Realism and the Natural Theology of the earlier Scottish philosophers, Fraser's is a moral idealism, a new philosophy of theism which has shaped for itself a *via media* between the deism of the eighteenth century and the pantheism of the nineteenth.

In two early essays, on 'Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy' (1853), and on 'Mansel's Limits of Religious Thought' (1859), Martineau clearly expressed his dissent from the doctrine of Nescience as held by both Hamilton and Mansel. Of Hamilton's 'law of the conditioned,' he says: 'What is this but the morbid lament of scepticism? Faith in the veracity of our faculties, if it means anything, requires us to believe that *things are as they appear*—that is, appear to the mind in the last and highest resort; and to deal with the fact that they *only appear* as if it constituted an eternal exile from their *reality* is to

attribute lunacy to universal reason.'[1] To Mansel's view, again, he pertinently objects, 'If intelligence consists in distinguishing, how can distinguishing be an incompetency to understand?'[2] Mansel's theory of knowledge 'cuts away the only supports on which religious thought can rest or move; and nothing short of an unqualified ontological scepticism is in agreement with his premisses.'[3]

Martineau reached his own position in philosophy by way of reaction from the sensationalism and associationism in which, in its extreme Priestleyan form, he had been educated. Though he at first accepted this view without question, and even taught it for some years, further reflection convinced him that it was invalidated by the facts of our moral experience and by the principle of causality, truly understood. Moral responsibility implies freedom, as opposed to the necessity of Priestley; conscience implies the obligatoriness of right conduct and, therefore, the existence of a righteous Will to impose this obligation upon us. Further, causation is not synonymous with necessary succession; the only cause we know is will, or moral agency. It follows that God, as the ultimate or first Cause, is Will. This conception of God as supreme Will, at once the Creator of the world and the sovereign Law-giver, was more sharply accentuated by Martineau's later opposition to absolute idealism, which he identified with pantheism and in which he saw a menace to the ethical life no less serious than the sensationalism and determinism which in his youth had chiefly threatened its interests. The citadel of morality he finds in the freedom of the human will; and this seems to him to imply the falsity not only of the identification of the self with the character, but also of a doctrine of the immanence of God in man and in nature which excludes His transcendence. In the ethical field itself the doctrine of Utilitarianism seems to him to explain away, rather than to explain, the central fact of moral obligation;

[1] *Essays*, iii. 481. [2] *Ibid.*, iii. 135. [3] *Ibid.*, iii. 133.

and his own ethical theory differs from the old Intuitionism simply in the stress which it lays upon the motive or 'spring,' as distinguished from the action, and upon the preferability of a higher to a lower spring, as distinguished from the rightness or wrongness of any single action or motive, in itself, and as such.

We may well doubt, with R. H. Hutton, his pupil and friend, 'whether the historian of the English thought of our time will credit Martineau with any distinct modification of the theological or philosophical opinions of this age.' His teaching, Hutton adds, was 'something that went below opinion; it was a revelation of spiritual character and power. That was the impressive thing in James Martineau.'[1] It is this that impresses his readers, as it impressed his pupils—the personality of the writer rather than the substance of his thought. It is in his religious rather than in his philosophical writings, we must again agree with Hutton, that 'the real Martineau, the spiritual teacher who will endure, has accomplished his greatest and finest work.' His influence and popularity must be attributed, in no small measure, to his gift of style. Hutton calls it 'a singularly noble and remarkable prose style.' But it is more appropriate to the sermon than to the philosophical treatise; it is much too ornate, figurative, and rhetorical for the latter. Its wealth of imagery, its very brilliance, are apt to pall; even its 'dignity' is sometimes oppressive; and it is fatally diffuse. Yet it is characteristic, and a revelation of a nature touched to fine issues, of an eloquent preacher rather than an original thinker.

The influences which have chiefly determined the philosophy of Fraser are the views of Locke and Berkeley rather than those of the Scottish School. His sympathies are with the Baconian and Lockian spirit of faithfulness, at all costs, to the concrete facts of human experience rather than with the Continental ambition to construct a com-

[1] *Spectator*, Jan. 27, 1900.

pletely articulated system such as we find in the absolute idealism of Hegel. 'My inclination,' he tells us, 'was to an English manner of treatment, so far as it keeps firm hold of what is given in concrete experience, under conditions of place and time, and refuses to pursue a unity that is possible for men only in a world of abstractions.'[1] As the author of the classical editions of Berkeley's Works and of Locke's *Essay*, he could not fail to assimilate the English philosophical tradition, alike on its empirical and on its idealistic side. Deeply impressed by Hume's sceptical reduction of the Lockian philosophy, he has grasped the significance of Hume for the past and the future of philosophy far more thoroughly than either Reid or Hamilton had done. Of the Scottish philosophers, apart from Hamilton, the one who most nearly influenced him was Thomas Brown, whose thought is much more akin to the scepticism of Hume than to the Natural Realism of Reid. It was Brown's account of the nature of causation that seems to have first awakened his interest in the ultimate questions of philosophy. 'I was for a time fascinated,' he says, 'by the simplicity of Brown's superficial explanation. I had been wont to suppose that a "cause" meant a mysterious something, also called "power," somehow contained within things, but distinct from the visible things in which it was believed to reside. . . . Brown's analysis dissolved this conception as an illusion. The "powers" of things, he argued, must be the very things themselves which we see and feel; these, however, only when looked at as the invariable antecedents of changes which, under given conditions, make their appearance, and which we call "effects" of the antecedents. Causation, in short, is a relation of constant sequence, under which one group of phenomena is transformed into another group.'[2] Deeper reflection, however, revealed the unsatisfactoriness of this view: it left unexplained the uniformity or constancy of the causal series which yet it presupposed. 'So Brown's supposed world of constant

[1] *Biographia Philosophica*, p. 138.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 49.

orderly antecedence and consequence gradually gave rise to a mood of universal uncertainty. The very tie which makes the universe a universe seemed to be loosed. . . . Through Brown's dissolving view of causation, I seemed bound to surrender to the total doubt of Hume, and the last chapter of Hume's *Treatise* described the situation.'[1] It was in Berkeley's conception of causation or power as, in the strict sense, spiritual or the expression of will, that Fraser found deliverance from the scepticism which had resulted from an exclusive consideration of its physical and scientific aspects. Berkeley taught him that physical causes were really but signs, and that real causes or powers were spiritual, the expression of spiritual purpose. The further problem raised by the necessity of presupposing uniformity in the world of natural events remained for later solution in connexion with the question raised for him by Hamilton, that of the nature and limits of human knowledge. But the substitution of the Berkeleyan for the Humian conception of causation rendered conceivable the divine immanence in the world of natural phenomena, or the 'supernatural' character of 'nature'; and the mere Immaterialism which was all that had hitherto been discovered in Berkeley became clearly subordinate in importance to the 'spiritual realism' which his account of causation was seen to imply.

Fraser's central and ever-recurring question, discussed tentatively in the Introductions and Notes to Berkeley and Locke, as well as in the volumes devoted to the life and thought of these philosophers, and finally in the Gifford lectures on 'The Philosophy of Thesim,' is the Hamiltonian question of the nature and limits of knowledge, deepened and widened as seen in the light of the scepticism of Hume. In an essay on 'The Insoluble Problem,' in the *North British Review* (1854), he 'pondered over this supreme part of Hamilton's philosophy.' The article expressed a somewhat critical attitude towards the Philosophy of the Conditioned. 'An exhaustive explanation of the

[1] *Biographia Philosophica*, p. 51.

mysteries in the Divine Reality seemed possible only in Omniscience; but man is not and cannot become omniscient. Yet this intellectual helplessness was not inconsistent with a progressive human knowledge of the Active Reason that is (so far) revealed in all the facts and laws of the physical and spiritual universe.'[1] 'So-called human knowledge, being at last *necessarily* incomplete and incompletable, may be called knowledge or ignorance, according to the way in which it is looked at, and the meaning associated with these two terms.'[2] In another early essay, on 'Scottish Metaphysics,' we find Fraser suggesting 'the value of some more precise and available canon of conciliatory criticism, than the mere proclamation of *human ignorance* concerning all which transcends contemporaneous and successive nature. How can faith be maintained amid an absolute negation of knowledge, which implies a total suspense of judgment?'[3]

We must, then, assume the validity of our knowledge as far as it goes, incomplete as it is and must ever remain; but its validity is an assumption or postulate which we can never prove. It is a postulate to be found at the heart of all knowledge, scientific as well as moral and religious; and Fraser's challenge to the scientific Agnostic is to abandon this postulate without at the same time rendering his own scientific procedure unreasonable and contradictory. A truly consistent agnosticism, he argues, is synonymous with universal nescience or absolute scepticism. 'Hume sees that this agnosticism, when fully thought out, involves *total* nescience, not merely theological ignorance. In truth the negative revolution which was proposed by Hume, in his juvenile "Treatise of Human Nature," is more bold and thorough than the scientific agnosticism of Huxley, which claims him as ist parent: it involves the complete dissolution of common knowledge and science, not of theology alone. . . . All assertion about what is outside present feeling must be unproved assertion. Intellect can at the most only have

[1] *Biographia Philosophica*, p. 148.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 156.
[3] *Essays in Philosophy*, pp. 194, 195.

strength enough to extinguish itself.'[1] The scientific interpretability of nature is the presupposition of its scientific interpretation; science, as well as action, assumes the orderliness or uniformity of nature. But 'is not this interpretability of nature another name for its innate divinity—its final supernaturalness?'[2] 'Faith in the laws of nature is unconscious faith in God omnipresent in nature. It is in this moral reliance on the surroundings amidst which we live and move and have our being that men are able to transcend their momentary perceptions, and to bring into a large or scientific experience what is not actually present to their senses.'[3] Thus 'the incoherent agnosticism that retains physical science is not really a protest against faith; it is only an arrest of faith at the point at which faith advances from a narrower to a larger interpretation of life and the universe.'[4]

But it is not only in its beginnings, but also in its ultimate issues, that our knowledge necessitates faith in that which transcends knowledge. If he does not, like Hamilton, insist upon the ultimate self-contradictoriness of human knowledge, Fraser does insist, with no less emphasis, upon its ultimate mysteriousness. Whenever we attempt to complete it, it loses itself in mystery. This is especially true of space, time and causality, the three categories of physical science. 'The understanding, measuring by sense and imagination, tries to transcend itself, and in doing so is always lost at last in the Infinite Reality. How to reconcile finite places with the Immensity in which place seems lost, or finite times with the Eternity in which duration seems to disappear,—the placed with the placeless, the timed or dated with the timeless,—is the mystery of an experience which, like ours, is conditioned by place and time, in a way that must always leave thought at the last under a sense of intellectual incompleteness and dissatisfaction.'[5] The lesson of this final incompleteness of human knowledge is the necessity of faith

[1] *Philosophy of Theism*, 2nd ed., pp. 112, 113. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 115. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 120. [5] *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 97.

at the end as well as at the beginning, the equal impossibility of universal nescience, or scepticism, and of omniscience, or perfect insight. Man's true place is in that 'isthmus of a middle state' which lies neither in rational insight nor in total ignorance, but in a reasonable faith.

This faith is a moral faith, or faith not merely in the rationality, but in the goodness, of the ultimate Power. The ultimate presupposition of the validity of human knowledge is, as Descartes insisted, the divine veracity or, in Fraser's words, the trustworthiness of our experience, the assumption that the ultimate Power will not put us to intellectual or moral confusion. 'If God, or Perfect Goodness, is supreme, external nature and my original faculties cannot delude me. For this would be to suppose that the Universal Nature and my nature are in contradiction, so that I might be obliged to believe a lie. The presupposition that forbids the entrance of this total scepticism is the presupposition that God or Perfect Goodness is omnipresent and omnipotent. The trustworthiness of my original nature and the interpretability of universal nature, *presuppose* the constant action of morally perfect Power at the heart of the Whole.'[1] As the presupposition of all thought and of all reasonable action alike, the existence, or rather the activity, of God or Perfect Goodness cannot be proved; it is itself the presupposition of all proof. The ultimateness of the distinction between moral or personal beings and impersonal things is the great barrier to a complete knowledge of the universe; we cannot reconcile man's freedom with the necessity of nature or with the omnipotence of God. The attempt to demonstrate the existence and nature of the Ultimate Reality leads inevitably to a pantheistic or non-moral interpretation of it, to the elimination of that which is the guiding feature of Reality as we experience it, moral personality.

But moral experience itself presents a great obstacle to

[1] *Philosophy of Theism*, p. 176.

the belief in the perfect goodness of the ultimate Power. 'The great enigma of theistic faith' is the fact of moral evil. The alternative which it compels us to face is 'a universe, of non-moral things,' in which evil cannot exist because good is equally impossible—a non-moral universe on the one hand, or a universe which includes 'persons, who, as persons, must have an absolute power to make themselves bad'—a moral universe which, as moral, implies the possibility of immoral actions, on the other; a universe of things or a universe in which things serve the purposes and are the instruments of the moral education of persons; a universe which is neither good nor evil, or a universe which, because it is not wholly good, but contains within it the possibility of both good and evil, may progressively become better. 'Is not a world that includes persons *better* than a wholly non-moral world, from which persons are excluded—say on account of the risk of the entrance into existence of what ought not to exist, through the personal power to act ill implied in morally responsible individual agency?' A person who is not free to do what he ought not to do is not a person, and 'God *cannot* make actual what involves express contradiction—namely, the existence of a person who is not a person; for individual personality involves responsible freedom to act ill. If this seems to limit omnipotence, or make God finite, the alternative supposition—that the existence of beings who are morally responsible for their acts is impossible for God in a perfectly constituted universe, is surely not less a limitation of omnipotence. It is a limitation, too, that is imposed only on the ground of a residuum of incomplete or mysterious conception implied in the idea of individual or finite personality: whilst the obstacle to a being existing, who is at once a responsible person, and yet unable to act freely, lies not in its mysteriousness, but in its evident absurdity.'[1]

[1] *Philosophy of Theism*, p. 268.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEALISTIC ANSWER TO HUME—SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY AND ABSOLUTE IDEALISM

1. *Spiritual Philosophy—Coleridge and Newman*

The earliest, and in some ways the most influential, representative of German Transcendental Philosophy in England is the poet-philosopher, Coleridge. As we have seen, Mill regarded him as dividing with Bentham the allegiance of the thoughtful youth of the time, and Leslie Stephen agrees that 'he was undoubtedly the most conspicuous representative of the tendencies opposed to utilitarianism.' 'The most remarkable thing,' says the latter writer, 'is the apparent disproportion between Coleridge's definite services to philosophy and the effect which he certainly produced upon some of his ablest contemporaries.' 'His writings are a heap of fragments,' they consist of 'random and discursive hints.' 'His most coherent exposition [in the *Biographia Literaria*] is simply appropriated from Schelling, though he ascribes the identity to a "genial coincidence of thought."'[1] It is a striking testimony to Coleridge's real speculative power that, in spite of these obvious shortcomings in the form of its presentation, his philosophical teaching should have made such a deep impression upon the readers of his books, as well as upon those who came under the spell of his conversational powers. The unfortunate and ominous literary plagiarism to which Leslie Stephen gives such prominence by no means cancels the fact of Coleridge's originality as a

[1] *English Utilitarians*, ii. 373–4, 380.

thinker. He was no mere purveyor of German philosophy to the English public. Even where his views approach most nearly to those of Kant and Schelling, and are most clearly influenced by these philosophers, with the one exception referred to, he maintains his independence, and is apt to give the theory a turn of his own which its original expositor would have entirely repudiated.

Mill describes Coleridge as 'the great awakener in this country of the spirit of philosophy, within the bounds of traditional opinions. He has been, almost as truly as Bentham, "the great questioner of things established"; for a questioner need not necessarily be an enemy. By Bentham, beyond all others, men have been led to ask themselves, in regard to any ancient or received opinion, Is it true? and by Coleridge, What is the meaning of it?'[1] Yet in Mill's eyes Coleridge is pre-eminently the representative of a wise conservatism in the sphere of politics and religion. After a graphic description of the state of things which the eighteenth century had left as an inheritance to the nineteenth, he says: 'This was not a state of things which could recommend itself to any earnest mind. It was sure in no great length of time to call forth two sorts of men—the one demanding the extinction of the institutions and creeds which had hitherto existed; the other, that they be made a reality: the one pressing the new doctrines to their utmost consequences; the other re-asserting the best meaning and purposes of the old. The first type attained its greatest height in Bentham; the last in Coleridge'[2] This is a characterisation to which Coleridge himself might well have assented. The revolt which he represents against the negative rationalism of the eighteenth century might be described in his own language as the revolt of the Reason against the Understanding. The eighteenth century had been, on the whole, the reign of the discursive understanding; its criterion of truth had been 'conceivability,' it had been the enemy of 'en-

[1] *Dissertations*, i. 393. [2] *Ibid.*, i. 436.

thusiasm,' of imagination, of the higher reason and its intuitions. Coleridge would substitute a 'dynamic' for its 'mechanical' system, a spiritual for its materialistic and naturalistic view of the world and human life. For its futile 'Natural Theology' and 'Natural Religion' he would substitute a philosophy which, by its spiritual insight, should end the old conflict between philosophy and religion.

Mill's suggestion that Coleridge kept his questionings 'within the bounds of traditional opinions' is apt to suggest a serious misconception as to the limitations of his philosophical experience. As a matter of fact, the comparatively conservative views which he finally accepted were reached after a wide and varied journey in the world of speculative thought, just as his political and theological conservatism was a reaction from the extremely radical views on these questions entertained by him in his youth. Like Wordsworth and Southey, Coleridge came under the spell of the ideas that animated the French Revolution. He had resolved to join Southey in realising a 'pantisocracy' on the banks of the Susquehana, and later he had attempted the rôle of Unitarian preacher. His earliest philosophical enthusiasm, when a schoolboy at Christ's Hospital, was the mysticism of Plotinus, as we learn from Lamb's famous picture of 'the inspired charity-boy' expounding that author to his school-fellows. The next, and probably more serious, philosophical influence under which he came was that of Hartley. He 'named his first son after Hartley, and slept with the *Observations on Man* under his pillow,' says one who grew up under the same influence.[1] Hartley was, to his youthful vision,

> 'He of mortal kind
> Wisest, he first who marked the ideal tribes
> Up the fine fibres through the sentient brain.'[2]

It was only after much further speculative experience, and finally passing through a stage of Humian scepticism,

[1] Martineau, *Essays*, iv. 490.

[2] *Religious Musings*.

that he began to reconstruct a philosophy of his own on more positive and conservative lines. Mr. Shawcross, in his invaluable introduction to the Oxford edition of the *Biographia Literaria*, makes it clear that he had reached his characteristic positions before he made the acquaintance of Kant, and later of Schelling, that in the main he used what knowledge he acquired of these philosophers in the interests of the views which he had thus independently reached, and that he never attempted the accurate or complete reproduction of philosophical systems with which he only partially sympathised.

Coleridge's two leading doctrines, which he never developed into a philosophical system, though he often promised to do so, were the distinction between Imagination and Fancy, and that between Reason and Understanding. The former, which was partly worked out in conversations with Wordsworth and in reference to that poet's views as formulated in his well-known Preface to the *Poems*, is found in the *Biographia Literaria* (1817); the latter in the *Aids to Reflection* (1825).

The question of the nature of Imagination, and how it differs from Fancy, arose primarily, for Coleridge as for Wordsworth, with reference to the nature of poetry, and in the interests of a sound poetical criticism; but for Coleridge it ultimately expanded into the larger question of the function and validity of the Imagination in the search for truth. It was in listening to a poem of Wordsworth's that the question first arose in his mind. 'In poems, equally as in philosophic disquisitions, genius produces the strongest impressions of novelty, while it rescues the most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission. . . . This excellence, which in all Mr. Wordsworth's writings is more or less predominant, and which constitutes the character of his mind, I no sooner felt, than I sought to understand. Repeated meditations led me first to suspect (and a more intimate analysis of the human faculties, their appropriate marks, functions, and effects, matured my conjecture into full conviction), that fancy and imagination

were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or, at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same power.'[1] The essential difference is that while Fancy is determined by mere accidental and subjective association of ideas, Imagination works under the dominion of objective law and the truth of things; while the former is merely reproductive, the latter is truly creative. Imagination is the 'shaping and modifying power,' Fancy 'the aggregative and associative power.'[2] Coleridge therefore calls the former the 'esemplastic power,' and distinguishes two forms or degrees of it, the primary and the secondary. By the primary imagination he seems to mean the power by which the mind of man weaves the web of its experience out of the data of sensation; by the secondary, that higher degree of the same power, by which the poet and the philosopher seize the essential meaning of this common experience. It is this 'shaping spirit of Imagination' that is the real source of the beauty of Nature.

> 'O Lady! we receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone doth Nature live!
> Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!'

The distinction between Imagination and Fancy, to which so much importance is attached in the *Biographia Literaria*, gives place, in the *Aids to Reflection*, to the distinction between Reason and Understanding. This distinction, in the form in which it is stated, is borrowed from Kant, with whose philosophy Coleridge made acquaintance in 1801. 'To Kant,' says Mr. Shawcross, 'his obligations (as he was never tired of asserting) were far greater than to any other of Kant's countrymen: to him alone could he be said to assume in any degree the attitude of pupil to master. Yet even to Kant his debt seems on the whole to have been more formal than material—to have resided rather in the scientific state-

[1] *Biog. Phil.*, i. 60. [2] *Ibid.*, i. 193.

ment of convictions previously attained than in the acquisition of new truths. . . . In nothing does this appear more clearly than in the distinction of Reason and Understanding. This distinction, as elaborated by Kant, must have been hailed by Coleridge with especial joy; for it gave a rational basis to a presentiment of much earlier date.'[1] He accepts Leighton's definition of the Understanding as 'the faculty judging according to sense.' 'Hence we add the epithet *human*, without tautology: and speak of the *human* understanding, in disjunction from that of beings higher or lower than man. But there is, in this sense, no *human* reason.' His own definition of Understanding is 'The faculty by which we reflect and generalise.' It follows that 'Understanding in its highest form of experience remains commensurate with the experimental notices of the senses from which it is generalised. Reason, on the other hand, either predetermines experience, or avails itself of a past experience to supersede its necessity in all future time; and affirms truths which no sense could perceive, nor experiment verify, nor experience confirm. Yea, this is the test and character of a truth so affirmed, that in its own proper form it is *inconceivable*. For *to conceive* is a function of the Understanding, which can be exercised only on subjects subordinate thereto. And yet to the forms of the Understanding all truth must be reduced, that is to be fixed as an object of reflection and to be rendered *expressible*.'[2] The appropriate sphere of the Understanding is the natural, not the spiritual world. It is limited to the objects of sense and of possible experience. 'Wherever the forms of reasoning appropriate only to the *natural* world are applied to *spiritual* realities, it may be truly said, that the more strictly logical the reasoning is in all its *parts*, the more irrational is it as a *whole*.'[3]

Though Coleridge does not distinguish clearly between the speculative and the practical reason, it is the latter rather than the former that he regards as

[1] *Biog. Phil*, Introd., p. xli.
[2] *Aids to Reflection*, under Aph. viii.
[3] *Ibid.*, Introd. to Aph. x.

the organ of spiritual vision. 'If not the abstract or speculative reason—and yet a reason there must be in order to a rational belief—then it must be the *practical* reason of man, comprehending the Will, the Conscience, the Moral Being with its inseparable interests and Affections—that Reason, namely, which is the Organ of *Wisdom*, and (as far as man is concerned) the source of living and actual Truths.'[1] To the practical reason he attributes knowledge of the ultimate spiritual realities, while Kant limited knowledge to phenomena, and denied to the practical reason the privilege of speculation. The truth seems to be that Coleridge comes nearer to the doctrine of Jacobi than to that of Kant, as Hort remarks in his excellent essay.[2] 'I should have no objection,' says Coleridge, 'to define reason with Jacobi, and with his friend Hemsterhuis, as an organ bearing the same relation to spiritual objects, the universal, the eternal, and the necessary, as the eye bears to material and contingent *phenomena*. But then it must be added, that it is an organ identical with its appropriate objects. Thus God, the soul, eternal truth, etc., are the objects of reason; but they are themselves reason.'[3] Practical reason thus becomes synonymous with Faith, which he defines as 'fidelity to our own being—so far as such being is not and cannot become an object of the senses; and hence, by clear inference or implication, to being generally, as far as the same is not the object of the senses; and again to whatever is affirmed or understood as the condition, or concomitant, or consequence of the same.'[4] In the Will or originative agency of man he finds the clue to the distinction of Spirit from Nature. These terms are properly antithetic, 'so that the most general and *negative* definition of Nature is, Whatever is not Spirit; and *vice versâ* of Spirit. That which is not comprehended in Nature: or in the language of our elder divines, that which transcends Nature. But nature

[1] *Aids to Reflection*, Aph. ii.
[2] *Cambridge Essays*, 1856.
[3] *The Friend*, i. 208, ed. 1844, quoted by Hort, p. 322.
[4] *Essay on Faith*.

is the term in which we comprehend all things that are representable in the forms of time and space, and subjected to the relations of cause and effect: and the cause of the existence of which, therefore, is to be sought for perpetually in something antecedent. . . . It follows, therefore, that whatever originates its own acts, or in any sense contains in itself the cause of its own state, must be *spiritual*, and consequently *supernatural:* yet not on that account necessarily *miraculous.* And such must the responsible WILL in us be, if it be at all.'[1]

The distinction between Reason and Understanding gives the clue to the difference between true Morality and mere Prudence. 'Morality arising out of the Reason and Conscience of Men, and Prudence, which in like manner flows out of the Understanding and the natural Wants and Desires of the Individual, are two distinct things.'[2] A writer who, like Paley, reduces morality to prudence, is not entitled to be called a moralist. 'Schemes of conduct, grounded on calculations of self-interest; or on the average consequences of actions, supposing them *general;* form a branch of Political Economy, to which let all due honour be given. Their utility is not here questioned. But however estimable within their own sphere, such schemes, or any one of them in particular, may be, they do not belong to Moral Science, to which, both in kind and purpose, they are in all cases *foreign*, and, when substituted for it, *hostile.*'[3] An action is good, not in respect of its external consequences, but as an expression of the unity of the human with the divine will. 'Whatever seeks to separate itself from the Divine Principle, and proceeds from a false centre in the agent's particular will, is evil—a work of darkness and contradiction. It is sin, and essential falsehood.'[4] Morality consists in the identity of the will with the practical reason. 'Conscience is a witness respecting the identity of the will and the reason effected by the self-subordination of the

[1] *Aids to Reflection*, Introd. to Aph. x.
[2] *Ibid.*, under Aph. vii.
[3] *Ibid.*, Aph. xii.
[4] *Loc. cit.*

will, or self, to the reason, as equal to, or representing, the will of God.'[1]

The reader cannot fail to be disappointed with the style of the *Aids to Reflection*; it is certainly not to its literary quality that its influence is to be traced. As Traill says, it possesses 'less charm of thought, less beauty of style, less even of Coleridge's seldom-failing force of effective statement' than almost any of his writings.[2] The *Biographia Literaria* is written more in the author's own manner, 'the manner of the great pulpit orators of the seventeenth century,' whose spirit and style he had caught from sympathetic study of their works. But the real interest and value of both books lies in their substance and spirit, in the thought and criticism which they contain, in the moral earnestness which inspires them, and communicates itself to the reader.

In an article written in 1839, quoted in the *Apologia*, John Henry Newman connects Coleridge with Scott, Southey, and Wordsworth, as a representative of 'the need which was felt both by the heart and the intellect of the nation for a deeper philosophy.' 'While history in prose and verse was thus made the instrument of Church feelings and opinions, a philosophical basis for the same was laid in England by a very original thinker, who, while he indulged a liberty of speculation, which no Christian can tolerate, and advocated conclusions which were often heathen rather than Christian, yet after all installed a higher philosophy into inquiring minds, than they had hitherto been accustomed to accept. In this way he made trial of his age, and succeeded in interesting its genius in the cause of Catholic truth.'[3] Newman himself, in his *Grammar of Assent* (1870), attempts to determine the true method of thought on the ultimate questions. The work is of great philosophical, as well as religious significance, and is a remarkable example of that

[1] *Essay on Faith.*
[2] *Coleridge*, in 'English Men of Letters,' p. 179.
[3] *Apologia*, p. 97.

style, so characteristic of its author yet so impossible to describe, which combines perfect lucidity and the total absence of straining after effect with a beauty and dignity all its own, the utmost simplicity with an undefinable distinction.

Newman, like Coleridge, is the enemy of rationalism, or the attempt, which he regards as foredoomed to failure, to reduce faith to terms of logic. The ultimately decisive element in Assent is, he holds, the personal element. Certitude is a subjective feeling, varying with the individual, rather than a unanimity determined by reference to a common standard. 'We need the interposition of a Power, greater than human teaching and human argument, to make our beliefs true and our minds one.'[1] We apprehend the ultimate Reality in the same way as we apprehend ordinary matters of fact; in both cases alike Assent is implicitly rational, though it transcends the limits of explicit proof. The faith which is present in all our so-called knowledge is, we must believe, entirely rational; but it is vain to attempt to rationalise it. The certainties of belief are themselves the final resultant of a mass of probabilities; the 'proofs' which determine our Assent are not logical proofs, and the attempt to establish the validity of these beliefs on logical grounds can only result in incurable scepticism.

The entire argument rests upon the distinction between the 'notional' and the 'real,' the abstract and the concrete, alike in apprehension and in assent. The notional has to do with the abstractions of thought, the real with the actual things, the matters of fact of our experience. Real assent, or belief, since it depends upon experience, is always personal, 'the accident of this or that man.' It is always complete; we cannot rightly speak of 'degrees of assent,' varying from probability to certainty according to the evidence that determines it. Assent is never merely 'the echo of an inference,' it is always 'a substantive act.'[2] We must further distinguish

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 375. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

'certitude' from assent. Certitude is a 'deliberate assent given expressly after reasoning';[1] 'it follows upon examination and proof, as the bell sounds the hour, when the hands reach it.'[2] But the reasoning or inference upon which it rests is informal, not formal, implicit, not explicit. Formal inference is notional and abstract; hence the logic which formulates it tends always to the symbolic form, it 'starves each term down till it has become the ghost of itself, and everywhere one and the same ghost, "omnibus umbra locis."'[3] Logic thus separates us from reality, and acquaints us with a world of abstractions. 'This universal living scene of things is after all as little a logical world as it is a poetical; and, as it cannot without violence be exalted into poetical perfection, neither can it be attenuated into a logical formula.'[4] Formal inference leads, therefore, only to probability; it can never yield certainty. Its premisses are assumed, not proved. It depends upon 'first principles,' which 'are called self-evident by their respective advocates because they are evident in no other way.' 'It only leads us back to first principles, about which there is interminable controversy.'[5] And its conclusions are always abstract, never concrete. It confuses the similar with the identical, the general with the universal. The real is always individual, similar to other individuals, but never identical with them; our statements about it may have general, they can never have universal validity. Compared with the cumbrous and ineffective methods of formal logic, 'how short and easy a way to a true conclusion is the logic of good sense; how little syllogisms have to do with the formation of opinion; how little depends upon the inferential proofs, and how much upon those pre-existing beliefs and views, in which men either already agree with each other or hopelessly differ, before they begin to dispute, and which are hidden deep in our nature, or, it may be, in our personal peculiarities.'[6]

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 229. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 236. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 267.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 268. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 270. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 277.

The real method by which we attain to concrete certainties, by which conditional inference leads to unconditional assent, is rather the intuitive judgment or perception which seizes the conclusion as a result of a mass of converging probabilities, the tact of the trained intellect which cannot analyse the reasons that have appealed to it, or formulate the hints and suggestions that have led to its decision. 'It is the cumulation of probabilities, independent of each other, arising out of the nature and circumstances of the particular case which is under review; probabilities too fine to avail separately, too subtle and circuitous to be convertible into syllogisms, too numerous and various for such conversion, even were they convertible.'[1] In such a real inference we feel the momentum of the mass of probabilities, confirming and correcting one another, and the conclusion is 'an unwritten summing-up'; the mind is 'swayed and determined by a body of proof, which it recognises only as a body, and not in its constituent parts.'[2] Or, more accurately stated, the decisive factor in the entire procedure is 'the living mind' of the individual. The impression which the body of proof makes upon the individual mind varies with the individual; for it is not strictly an impression, but the result of the reaction of the mind itself. 'It follows that what to one intellect is a proof is not so to another, and that the certainty of a proposition does properly consist in the certitude of the mind that contemplates it.'[3]

The ultimate principle, then, in belief, is a kind of instinct or feeling for truth, what Newman calls 'the Illative Sense,' or 'right judgment in ratiocination'; and 'such a living *organon* is a personal gift, and not a mere method or calculus.'[4] The ultimate premisses or first principles of our reasoning are always personal. 'Even when we agree together, it is not perhaps that we learn one from another, or fall under any law of agreement, but that our separate idiosyncrasies happen to concur.'[5]

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 288. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 292. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 293.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 316. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 373.

What guarantee have we, then, for the objectivity of truth, if there is no common measure to which we can appeal, if the only standard is the subjective feeling of the individual? The only answer is that we must trust our faculties; the ultimate sanction of truth is 'the trustworthiness of the Illative Sense.'[1] 'There is no ultimate test of truth besides the testimony borne to truth by the mind itself.'[2] It is 'unmeaning' to 'criticise or find fault with our own nature, which is nothing else than we ourselves, instead of using it according to the use of which it ordinarily admits.' Our criticism, our very scepticism, is an exercise of that nature, and implies that it is accepted as trustworthy. We need not hope, by 'antecedent reasoning,' to prove this trustworthiness or to escape the personal equation in our apprehension of truth. 'What is left to us but to take things as they are, and to resign ourselves to what we find?'[3] What is left to us but to accept our nature, in its intellectual as well as its moral faculties, as the expression of the will of God? Our trust in our own nature is really trust in God, our Maker.

The difficulty itself, however, like Hume's sceptical doubt which also finds its practical solution in trust in 'human nature,' arises from the failure to discriminate, within that nature, the common or universal from the merely individual and idiosyncratic element. While it is obviously unmeaning to attempt to transcend human nature and to find outside it a standard of truth to which it must conform, and while the language of even such a transcendentalist as Kant may well suggest such an impossible procedure, it remains to ask whether, within human nature, the rational and universal cannot be discriminated from the subjective and individual. Newman's own central view of the implicit rationality of true belief suggests the possibility of its indefinite rationalisation. It does not follow that, because the individual does not himself make the analysis of the

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 359. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 350. [3] *Loc. cit.*

rational grounds of his belief, his belief is incapable of such analysis and justification. It was the ambition of the Absolute Idealists to demonstrate the rationality and objectivity of that Assent the grounds of which remained for Newman inscrutable to reason.

2. *Absolute Idealism: Earlier Version—Ferrier and Grote*

The earliest, and in some ways the most impressive, statement of absolute idealism in English philosophy is that of J. F. Ferrier, professor of moral philosophy at St. Andrews from 1845 to 1864. No less interested than Coleridge and Newman in the affirmation of a spiritual view of the universe, he holds that it is possible to demonstrate the truth of such a view. In any case he is convinced that it is the function of Philosophy to demonstrate truth; he defines it as 'a body of reasoned truth,' 'the attainment of truth *by the way of reason*.' Its method is the 'speculative method, which means nothing more than that we should expend upon the investigation the uttermost toil and application of thought; and that we should estimate the truths which we arrive at, not by the scale of their importance, but by the scale of their difficulty of attainment, of their cost of production. *Labour*, we repeat it, is the standard which measures the value of truth, as well as the value of wealth.'[1] He has no patience, therefore, with the pretensions of the 'Philosophy of Common Sense.' Of Hamilton, whom he knew intimately, he says, 'I have learned more from him than from all other philosophers put together; more, both as regards what I assented to and what I dissented from'; but he regarded the time spent by Hamilton in editing Reid's works as little better than wasted. So far from Common Sense being the criterion of philosophical truth, he holds that 'the conciliation of ordinary thinking, or "common sense," as it is sometimes rather abusively called, and philosophy, can be

[1] *Philosophical Remains*, ii. 431.

very well effected by the former giving in her submission to the decisions of the compulsory reason.'[1] He has a further ground of quarrel with the Scottish Philosophy, namely, that it adopts the psychological method and believes in a 'science of the human mind.' 'Perhaps no better or more comprehensive description of the object of metaphysical or speculative philosophy could be given than this: that it is a science which exists, and has at all times existed, chiefly for the purpose of exposing the vanity and confounding the pretensions of what is called the "science of the human mind."'[2] 'The best way of attaining to correct opinions on most metaphysical subjects is by finding out what has been said on any given point by the psychologists, and then by saying the very opposite.'[3]

Already in his own lifetime Ferrier was regarded, as he has been constantly represented since, as an adherent of the Hegelian philosophy. Such an affiliation he strongly denied, rightly claiming originality for the way in which he reached a result which, it is true, coincides in the main with that of the Hegelian dialectic. In an appendix to the *Institutes*, he says: 'Some of my critics assert that my philosophy is nothing but an echo of Hegel's; others have doubted whether I know anything at all about that philosopher. The exact truth of the matter is this: I have read most of Hegel's works again and again, but I cannot say that I am acquainted with his philosophy. I am able to understand only a few short passages here and there in his writings; and these I greatly admire for the depth of their insight, the breadth of their wisdom, and the loftiness of their tone. More than this I cannot say. If others understand him better, and to a larger extent, they have the advantage of me, and I confess that I envy them the privilege. But, for myself, I must declare that I have not found one word or one thought in Hegel which was available for my system, even if I had been disposed to use it. If Hegel follows (as I do) the demonstrative method, I own I cannot see it, and would

[1] *Institutes of Metaphysic*, Introd., sect. 49.
[2] *Remains*, ii. 445.
[3] *Institutes*, p. 315.

feel much obliged to any one who would point this out, and make it clear. In other respects, my method is diametrically opposed to his; he begins with the consideration of Being; my whole design compels me to begin with the consideration of Knowing.'[1] In the *Institutes* itself he speaks of Hegel as 'impenetrable, almost throughout, as a mountain of adamant,'[2] and exclaims, 'Hegel,—but who has ever yet uttered one intelligible word about Hegel? Not any of his countrymen,—not any foreigner,—seldom even himself.'[3] Internal evidence confirms what these words suggest, that Ferrier worked his way independently to his conclusions by correcting and developing the idealism of Berkeley, which seems to have formed the real starting-point of his own thinking, and in which, as thus corrected and developed, he found the substitute for the misleading views of Reid and Hamilton.

It was probably not so much the substance as the form of Ferrier's system, different as the latter really is from that of Hegel, that suggested the author's indebtedness to the great German idealist. In the *Institutes of Metaphysic* (1854), the argument is stated in a series of propositions, each of which is demonstrated and made the basis of those which follow, after the manner of Euclid or Spinoza, rather than that of Hegel. On reading the book, Mill wrote: 'His fabric of speculation is so effectively constructed, and imposing, that it almost ranks as a work of art. It is the romance of logic.'[4] In some ways, however, the form militates against the effectiveness of the argument, giving it an air of artificiality, diminishing its cumulative force and, in spite of the directness, lucidity, and strength of the style, seriously detracting from the literary quality of the work. In literary quality, as well as in freshness and spontaneity and in breadth and richness of treatment, the *Introduction to the Philosophy of Consciousness*, originally published as a series of articles in *Blackwood* in 1838–39, must be placed higher; nor can it be said that the later statement adds anything of material

[1] *Remains*, i. 486.
[2] *Institutes*, p. 40.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 91.
[4] *Letters*, i. 184.

value to the earlier argument. In both works there is a certain tendency to iteration and over-elaboration, in part the result of the author's facility of expression and tendency to rhetorical exaggeration. But the notable absence of pedantry and technicality and the general smoothness and crispness of the statement atone in great measure for any such defects; and the writer never forgets his undertaking to make clear the successive steps in the logical process of the argument.

In an essay on 'Berkeley and Idealism,' published in 1842, perhaps Ferrier's most perfect piece of philosophical writing, he signalises both the essential truth and the essential defect in a theory which was at the time much less understood than it is now. Berkeley, he says, 'certainly was the first to stamp the indelible impress of his powerful understanding on those principles of our nature, which, since his time, have brightened into imperishable truths in the light of genuine speculation. His genius was the first to swell the current of that mighty stream of tendency towards which all modern meditation flows, the great gulf-stream of Absolute Idealism.' The element of peculiar value in Berkeley's speculation is its concreteness, its faithfulness to reality. 'The peculiar endowment by which Berkeley was distinguished, far beyond his predecessors and contemporaries, and far beyond almost every philosopher who has succeeded him, was the eye he had *for facts*, and the singular pertinacity with which he refused to be dislodged from his hold upon them. . . . No man ever delighted less to expatiate in the regions of the occult, the abstract, the impalpable, the fanciful, and the unknown. His heart and soul clung with inseparable tenacity to the concrete realties of the universe; and with an eye uninfluenced by spurious theories, and unperverted by false knowledge, he saw directly into the very life of things.'[1] His theory needs only to be widened, and thus corrected, to provide the true explanation of which philosophy is in search. How this is to be done, is more

[1] *Remains*, ii. 293–4.

clearly stated in the *Institutes*. 'He saw that something subjective was a necessary and inseparable part of every object of cognition. But instead of maintaining that it was the ego or oneself which clove inseparably to all that could be known, and that this element must be thought of along with all that is thought of, he rather held that it was the senses, or our perceptive modes of cognition, which clove inseparably to all that could be known, and that these required to be thought of along with all that could be thought of. These, just as much as the ego, were held by him to be the subjective part of the total synthesis of cognition which could not by any possibility be discounted. Hence the unsatisfactory character of his ontology, which, when tried by the test of a rigorous logic, will be found to invest the Deity—the supreme mind, the infinite ego, which the terms of his system necessarily compel him to place in synthesis with all things—with human modes of apprehension, with such senses as belong to man—and to invest Him with these, not as a matter of contingency, but as a matter of necessity. Our only safety lies in the consideration—a consideration which is a sound, indeed inevitable logical inference—that our sensitive modes of apprehension are mere contingent elements and conditions of cognition; and that the ego or subject alone enters, of necessity, into the composition of everything which any intelligence can know.'[1]

Although there are occasional references to Kant in Ferrier's works, he develops his theory through a continuous criticism of Reid, on the one hand, and of Hamilton, on the other. Reid is, for him, the representative of Psychology or the 'science of the human mind,' and therefore, despite his own protestations to the contrary, of 'Representationism.' Hamilton is the representative of Agnosticism, or the doctrine of the unknowableness of the Absolute Reality. Against the former view, he argues that we have a direct knowledge of Reality, both

[1] *Institutes*, pp. 389, 390.

material and spiritual; against the latter, he formulates his 'agnoiology' or 'theory of ignorance,' to prove that the 'ignorance' of which Hamilton would convict the human mind is not properly called ignorance or defect, but is simply that repudiation of the unintelligible or self-contradictory which is the essential characteristic of intelligence, rather than a defect peculiar to the human mind.

The fundamental error of Psychology is the acceptance of sensation, or the 'state of consciousness,' as the original datum of knowledge, the consequence being that the inference to the existence of the object, as well as to the subject, is more or less uncertain. As a matter of fact, the subject and the object are inseparable. 'Matter *per se*' is never the object of knowledge; what we perceive is always 'Matter *mecum*.' The elementary fact of knowledge is not matter, but the perception of matter, or the subject as conscious of the object, either subjective or objective. Mere 'phenomena' never exist; what exists is always phenomenal to a self or subject. If we define 'substance' as that which is capable of existing, or of being conceived, alone and independently, then the conscious self, that is, the subject as conscious of an object, is substance, and can be known. The ego cannot know objects without knowing itself along with them; it cannot know itself except along with objects. It is because the psychologists have ignored the conscious, or rather the self-conscious self, which is present in all knowledge, that they have been unable to escape the conclusion that all we know is 'ideas' or 'phenomena' which represent, and may misrepresent, the object or substantial reality.

For the refutation of the Hamiltonian doctrine of the Relativity of Knowledge, Ferrier formulated what he regarded as an entirely original 'theory of ignorance.' Ignorance, he holds, presupposes the possibility of knowledge; we can be ignorant only of that which it is possible for us to know. It is not a defect, but a merit of knowledge not to know that which cannot be known because it is the unintelligible or the self-contradictory.

Now we have seen that subject and object, or mind and matter, *per se*, are both alike unknowable in this sense; since they are never presented in consciousness alone but always together, it follows that they cannot be represented or thought in separation from one another. It is of such an inconceivable or unintelligible reality that Hamilton proclaims that ignorance is inevitable; he might as well proclaim the unknowableness of Nothing, or of Nonsense. It is the glory, rather than the humiliation, of intelligence to repudiate the unintelligible or self-contradictory.

On the basis of this 'epistemology' and 'agnoiology' Ferrier proceeds to construct his 'ontology.' Self-conscious mind, the ultimate element in knowledge, is also the ultimate element in existence. Repudiating the errors of subjective idealism, he finds himself compelled to accept absolute or objective idealism. The individual ego, along with the universe of his thought, is not independent. 'The only *independent* universe which any mind or ego can think of is the universe in synthesis with some *other* mind or ego.'[1] And since *one* such other mind is sufficient to account for the universe of our experience, we are warranted in inferring that there is only one. Ferrier thus summarises the argument which yields 'this theistic conclusion': 'Speculation shows us that the universe, by itself, is the contradictory; that it is incapable of self-subsistency, that it can exist only *cum alio*, that all true and cogitable and non-contradictory existence is a synthesis of the subjective and the objective; and *then* we are compelled, by the most stringent necessity of thinking, to conceive a supreme intelligence as the ground and essence of the Universal Whole. Thus the postulation of the Deity is not only permissible, it is unavoidable. Every mind thinks, and *must* think of God (however little conscious it may be of the operation which it is performing), whenever it thinks of anything as lying beyond all human observation, or as

[1] *Institutes*, Pt. i. Prop. xiii.

subsisting in the absence or annihilation of all finite intelligences.'[1]

The ethical implications of such an idealism are strikingly suggested in the *Philosophy of Consciousness*, where the parallelism between the functions of self-consciousness in the intellectual and in the moral spheres is made clear, and it is shown that 'just as all perception originates in the antagonism between consciousness and our sensations, so all morality originates in the antagonism between consciousness and the passions, desires, or inclinations of the natural man.'[2] It is in this refusal to accept the guidance of the natural passions and inclinations, this 'direct antithesis' of the 'I' to the 'natural man,' that our moral freedom consists. What is this supreme act by which man asserts his supremacy over nature, within and without himself? 'What is it but the act of consciousness, the act of becoming "I," the act of placing *ourselves* in the room which sensation and passion have been made to vacate? This act may be obscure in the extreme, but still it is an act of the most *practical* kind, both in itself and in its results. . . . For what act can be more vitally practical than the act by which we realise our existence as free personal beings? and what act can be attended by a more practical result than the act by which we look our passions in the face, and, in the very act of looking at them, *look them down?*'[3]

An interesting statement of an essentially idealistic view is worked out with great independence by another English thinker, John Grote, Knightbridge professor of moral philosophy, in succession to Whewell, at Cambridge from 1855 to 1866, in his *Exploratio Philosophica*, the first part of which was published in 1865, the year before the author's death. Grote called the work, modestly but truthfully, 'rough notes,' and its unfinished literary form is doubtless largely responsible for the neglect which has been its fate. It contains, however, much vigorous and

[1] *Institutes*, p. 512. [2] *Remains*, ii. 208. [3] *Ibid.*, ii. 201.

suggestive thinking, and leaves the impression of distinct speculative power. The author's own positions are developed by the discussion of the views of such English writers as Ferrier, Hamilton, Mill, and Whewell. His point of view is clearly idealistic, and closely akin to that of Ferrier. Speaking of his own theory of knowledge, he says, 'I think Mr. Ferrier, with a manner of expression of his own, and a more ambitious, perhaps a better, method, does not in its great features differ from it.'[1] He thus states the great alternative of metaphysical thought as it has been formulated in the movement of English philosophy, and leaves us in no doubt as to his own decision. 'The difference as to philosophical view which is a real and fundamental one, whereas almost all differences which cannot be resolved into this have in them more or less of vagueness and mutual misunderstanding, is that between what I have called "positivism" on the one side, and on the other a view contrasted with this, which has no single name, though in application to ethics I should call it "idealism." The point of the difference is that in the former we look upon what we can find out by physical research as ultimate fact, so far as we are concerned, and upon conformity with it as the test of truth; so that nothing is admitted as true except so far as it follows by some process of inference from this. In opposition to this, the contrasted view is to the effect, that for philosophy, for our *entire* judgment about things, we must go beyond this, or rather go further back than it, the ultimate fact *really* (however for the purposes of physical science we may assume the former) for us—the basis upon which all rests—being not that things exist, but that we know them, *i.e.* think of them as existing. . . . In the former view, knowledge about things is looked upon as a possibly supervening accident to them or of them; in the latter view, their knowableness is a part, and the most important part, of their reality or essential being. In the former view, mind is supposed to follow,

[1] *Exploratio*, pt. i., p. 56.

desultorily and accidentally, after matter of fact; in the latter view mind or consciousness begins with recognising itself as a part of an entire supposed matter of fact or universe, and next as correspondent, in its subjective character, to the whole of this besides as object, while the understanding of this latter as *known*, germinates into the notion of the recognition of other mind or reason in it.'[1]

One of Grote's leading distinctions is that between what he calls 'knowledge of acquaintance,' mere awareness or knowledge *of*, and 'knowledge of judgment,' logical or conceptual knowledge, or knowledge *about*. The former is that immediate or intuitive apprehension of reality without which no knowledge is possible, and in which the distinctions of our later conceptual knowledge are already implicit. This contrast must not be misconceived as one between matter and form, or things and thought, as if the object gave the one and the subject the other. The thing or object is simply the datum of immediate experience understood or interpreted. Thought is not the reading of relations into the chaotic or unrelated material of sensation, but the discovery of the relations actually present in the world of our experience; the recognition, by the mind of the knowing subject, of the mind or reason in the universe of reality. This distinction is also described by Grote as one between 'immediateness' and 'reflection,' the reflective being identified with the philosophical point of view, and 'positivism' being condemned as an attempt to rest in the immediacy of experience as ultimate.

3. *Absolute Idealism: Later Versions—Stirling, Caird, Green, Bradley*

In 1865, the year after the death of Ferrier, there appeared a work which marked the inauguration of a new era in the development of English idealism. This was *The Secret of Hegel*, by James Hutchison Stirling. In

[1] *Exploratio*, pt. i., p. 59.

an article in the *Fortnightly Review* for October 1867 (republished in the volume *Jerrold, Tennyson, and Macaulay*) the author passes a ruthless condemnation upon the spurious reputation for a knowledge of German idealism which had attached itself to the name of Coleridge, as well as, in a minor degree, to that of De Quincey, and fastens especially upon Coleridge's 'dreamy misapprehensions' and 'strange misrepresentations' of the Kantian philosophy. Himself profoundly convinced of the truth of the Hegelian system, he set himself, in the *Secret*, to explain and defend that system. Stirling undoubtedly possessed 'the temperament of genius,' and was a man of remarkable speculative insight; but his style, though often striking, is so marked by the influence of Carlyle, and he so resolutely declines to conform to ordinary standards of systematic exposition, that his work is almost as difficult as the original which it is intended to illuminate. Yet its importance, and its influence at the time of its appearance, are not to be underestimated; it certainly called the attention of the English-speaking world to the significance of a system which even Ferrier had pronounced unintelligible, and brought home to the English mind the necessity of coming to terms, not only with Hegel, but with his predecessors, Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. For Stirling insisted upon going back to the origins of Hegelianism in these earlier systems, and in 1881 he followed up the *Secret of Hegel* with the *Textbook to Kant*, in which the defects of the earlier work were less apparent and in which he supported a one-sided interpretation of the Kantian philosophy, as represented by the first two divisions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, with great learning and with remarkable ability. His translation of Schwegler's *History of Philosophy*, published in 1867, which passed through many editions and was used by many generations of students, contains a series of illuminating 'annotations' which rival in interest and value the substance of the *History* itself. A little volume of lectures on *The Philosophy of Law* (1873) and the Gifford lectures on *Philosophy and Theology*

(1890) complete the list of Stirling's more important contributions to philosophy. The standpoint is always the same—that of the Hegelian idealism, which Stirling is inclined to interpret in a theistic rather than in a pantheistic sense.

The *Secret* was followed by a long series of works devoted to the same purpose of acquainting the insular English mind with the meaning of the German idealistic systems. Of these the most notable, as expositions of Kant and Hegel, were Edward Caird's *Philosophy of Kant* (1878) and *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* (1889), William Wallace's translations, with Prolegomena, of Hegel's *Logic* (1874) and of the *Philosophy of Mind* (1894), and Caird's little volume on *Hegel* in Blackwood's 'Philosophical Classics' (1883). Caird's works on Kant are, however, by no means merely expository; they are critical in the sense of correcting the Kantian philosophy in the light of what the writer regards as its deeper principles, which were only imperfectly grasped by Kant himself, and the comprehension of which delivers us from the limitations of the Kantian philosophy. While, especially in the second and larger work, Caird bestowed immense pains upon the investigation of the actual text of the *Critiques*, as well as of the gradual development of Kant's thought, as shown in earlier works, his ulterior purpose, in both books, is to use Kant as a stepping-stone to what he regards as the more adequate system of Hegel. In his lectures from the chair of moral philosophy in the University of Glasgow from 1866 to 1893, and afterwards as Master of Balliol College, Oxford, as well as in his Gifford lectures on *The Evolution of Religion* (1892) and *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers* (1903), he used Hegelianism with great effectiveness as a point of view from which to interpret the movement of philosophical and religious thought, and as a weapon with which to withstand the materialistic and agnostic tendencies of the time. Discarding the technical details of the system, and availing himself of its essential method, he sought to substitute concrete for abstract thinking and to reconcile

the contradictions of the scientific understanding in the higher synthesis of the speculative reason. It was the same work which Ferrier had attempted with less adequate historical outfit; and while the inspiration always obviously came from Hegel, Caird's own words are true of himself: 'The literal importation of Kant and Hegel into another country and time would not be possible if it were desirable, or desirable if it were possible. The mere change of time and place, if there were nothing more, implies new questions and a new attitude of mind in those whom the writer addresses, which would make a bare reproduction unmeaning. Moreover, this change of the mental atmosphere and environment is itself part of a development which must affect the doctrine also, if it is no mere dead tradition, but a seed of new intellectual life. Any one who writes about philosophy must have his work judged, not by its relation to the intellectual wants of a past generation, but by its power to meet the wants of the present time—wants which arise out of the advance of science, and the new currents of influence which are transforming man's social and religious life.'[1] Judged by such a standard, Caird's contribution to the English philosophical thought of his time must be accorded great value and importance.

In Caird's own judgment, however, as expressed in the same place, Thomas Hill Green, to whose memory the volume is dedicated, was 'an author who, perhaps more than any recent writer on philosophy, has shown that it is possible to combine a thorough appropriation of the results of past speculation with the freshness and spontaneity of an original mind.' His philosophy is no mere reproduction of German idealism, even in the sense in which Caird's work must be so described. While his 'whole work was devoted,' as the latter writer says, 'to the development of the results of the Kantian criticism of knowledge and morals,' he cannot justly be described as a

[1] Preface to *Essays in Philosophical Criticism*, edited by A. Seth and R. B. Haldane (1883).

disciple of Hegel. 'To Hegel he latterly stood in a somewhat doubtful relation; for while, in the main, he accepted Hegel's criticism of Kant, and held also that something *like* Hegel's idealism must be the result of the development of Kantian principles rightly understood, he yet regarded the actual Hegelian system with a certain suspicion as something too ambitious, or, at least, premature. "It must all be done over again," he once said, meaning that the first development of idealistic thought in Germany had in some degree anticipated what can be the *secure* result only of wider knowledge and more complete reflexion.' In a review, published in 1880, of John Caird's *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, which, he says, 'represents a thorough assimilation by an eminent Scotch theologian, who is also known as a most powerful preacher and writer, of Hegel's "Philosophy of Religion,"' Green thus defines his own attitude to Hegelian idealism. 'Hegel's doctrine has been before the world now for half a century, and though it has affected the current science and philosophy to a degree which those who depreciate it seem curiously to ignore, yet as a doctrine it has not made way. It may be doubted whether it has thoroughly satisfied even those among us who regard it as the last word of philosophy. When we think out the problem left by previous inquirers, we find ourselves led to it by an intellectual necessity; but on reflection we become aware that we are Hegelian, so to speak, with only a fraction of our thoughts—on the Sundays of "speculation," not on the weekdays of "ordinary thought"; and even if we silence all suspicion as to the truth and value of the "speculation," we still feel the need of some such mediation between speculative truth and our judgments concerning matters of fact as will help philosophy to come to an understanding with science, and either to answer those questions of "Whence" and "Whither" which the facts of the world suggest to us, or explain why they are inexplicable.'[1]

[1] Works, iii. 141–2.

Although Green did not himself 'do it all over again,' he did make a serious effort so to restate the idealistic position as to free it from the difficulties suggested in the above criticism: and we have the result in the *Prolegomena to Ethics*, published posthumously in 1883. The presupposition of a theory of ethics is, he holds, the demonstration of the spiritual nature of man; a 'natural science of man,' such as that from which Spencer had recently attempted to deduce the 'data of ethics,' seemed to Green to contradict the very idea of ethics. Accordingly he devotes the first book of his treatise to the investigation of 'the metaphysics of knowledge,' his object being to show that there is a 'spiritual principle' in knowledge, and therefore in nature. Like Ferrier, he insists upon the necessity of postulating a self-conscious and self-differentiating subject at the heart of knowledge, showing that Reality, as known, is a 'system of relations' which presupposes the synthetic activity of the self. The finite subject of knowledge, whose function it is to relate or think the data of sensation, and thus to constitute out of them objects of knowledge, and a world of such objects, is the reproduction in time of that Eternal Consciousness which alone can account at once for the intelligibility of nature and for our intellectual understanding of it. The significance of such a view is pointedly suggested in the review from which I have already quoted. 'To assume, because all reality requires thought to conceive it, that therefore thought is the condition of its existence, is, indeed, unwarrantable. But it is another matter if, when we come to examine the constituents of that which we account real—the determinations of things—we find that they all imply some synthetic action which we only know as exercised by our own spirit. Is it not true of all of them that they have their being in relations; and what other medium do we know of but a thinking consciousness in and through which the separate can be united in that way which constitutes relation? We believe that these questions cannot be worked out without leading to the conclusion that the real world is essentially a spiritual

world, which forms one inter-related whole because related throughout to a single subject. . . . But when we have satisfied ourselves that the world in its truth or full reality is spiritual, because on no other supposition is its unity explicable, we may still have to confess that a knowledge of it in its spiritual reality—such a knowledge of it as would be a knowledge of God—is impossible to us. To know God we must be God. The unifying principle of the world is indeed in us; it is our self. But, as in us, it is so conditioned by a particular animal nature that, while it yields that idea of the world as one which regulates all our knowledge, our actual knowledge remains a piecemeal process. We spell out the relations of things one by one; we pass from condition to condition, from effect to effect; but, as one fragment of truth is grasped, another has escaped us, and we never reach that totality of apprehension through which alone we could know the world as it is and God in it. This is the infirmity of our discursive understanding. If in one sense it reveals God, in another it hides him. Language which seems to imply its identification with God, or with the world in its spiritual reality, can lead to nothing but confusion.' On the other hand, 'that there is one spiritual self-conscious being, of which all that is real is the activity or expression; that we are related to this spiritual being, not merely as parts of the world which is its expression, but as partakers in some inchoate measure of the self-consciousness through which it at once constitutes and distinguishes itself from the world; that this participation is the source of morality and religion; this we take to be the vital truth which Hegel had to teach.'[1]

As the self transforms impressions of sense into objects of knowledge, so it transforms mere animal wants into motives of action. A motive is an idea of personal good, constituted by the identification of the self with some solicitation of sensibility, this activity of the self establishing man's freedom in the moral as well as in the intellec-

[1] Works, iii., 145–6.

tual life. The activity is in both cases alike spiritual, an activity of thought, speculative and practical, by which in the one case we idealise the real and in the other realise the ideal. The good, the idea of which is the motive of all virtuous action, is a common or social, while it is at the same time a personal good. 'Social life is to personality what language is to thought.'[1] Man, as a social being, is his own end. 'It is only in himself as he may become, in a complete realisation of what he has it in him to be, in his perfect character, that he can find satisfaction.' What this perfection is in detail we know only according to the measure of what we have so far done or are doing for its attainment. And this is to say that we have no knowledge of the perfection of man as the unconditional good, but that which we have of his goodness or the good will, in the form which it has assumed as a means to, or in the effort after, the unconditional good; a good which is not an object of speculative knowledge to man, but of which the idea—the conviction of there being such a thing—is the influence through which his life is directed to its attainment.'[2]

The inevitable correlate of the moral as of the intellectual life is God. The moral ideal implies 'the eternal realisation for, or in, the eternal mind of the capacities gradually realised in time. . . . A state of life or consciousness not yet attained by a subject capable of it, *in relation to that subject* we say *actually is not;* but if there were no consciousness for which it existed, there would be no sense in saying that *in possibility it is*, for it would simply be nothing at all.' It follows that 'there must be eternally such a subject which is all that the self-conscious subject, as developed in time, has the possibility of becoming; in which the idea of the human spirit, or all that it has in itself to become, is completely realised. This consideration may suggest the true notion of the spiritual relation in which we stand to God; that He is not merely a Being who has made us, in the sense that we

[1] *Prolegomena to Ethics*, sect. 183. [2] *Ibid.*, sect. 195.

exist as an object of the divine consciousness in the same way in which we must suppose the system of nature so to exist, but that He is a Being in whom we exist; with whom we are in principle one; with whom the human spirit is identical, in the sense that He *is* all which the human spirit is capable of becoming.'[1]

Finally, the capacity of moral development being synonymous with that of personal development, the personal immortality of man as a developing moral being seems to follow as a necessary consequence. 'A capacity consisting in a self-conscious personality cannot be supposed . . . to pass away. It partakes of the nature of the eternal. . . . We cannot believe in there being a real fulfilment of such a capacity in an end which should involve its extinction, because the conviction of there being an end in which our capacities are fulfilled is founded on our self-conscious personality—on the idea of an absolute value in a spirit which we ourselves are. And for the same reason we cannot believe that the capacities of men . . . can be really fulfilled in a state of things in which any rational man should be treated merely as a means, and not as in himself an end.'[2]

The latest, and perhaps we may venture to say the most important, statement of Absolute Idealism in English philosophy is that of Mr. F. H. Bradley, who in his *Appearance and Reality* (1893) offers an interpretation of the theory which differs materially from that of his predecessors. The greater subtlety of the thought is reflected in the greater compactness and luminousness of the style, as compared with Green. While far from aiming at literary effect, and always trusting to the essential interest of the argument as an appeal to the reader, Mr. Bradley is never unnecessarily obscure, and on occasion surprises us with flashes of humour and even of eloquence. In his hands, in spite of certain mannerisms, language is made a remarkably effective instrument of philo-

[1] *Prolegomena to Ethics*, sect. 187. [2] *Ibid.*, sect. 189

sophical expression. His attitude to Hegel is certainly not less independent than that of Green. In the Preface to *The Principles of Logic* (1883) he says: 'For Hegel himself, assuredly I think him a great philosopher, but I never could have called myself an Hegelian, partly because I cannot say that I have mastered his system, and partly because I could not accept what seems his main principle, or at least part of that principle.' In his earliest work, *Ethical Studies* (1876), a book which, he tells us in *Appearance and Reality*, 'in the main still expresses my opinions,' his allegiance to the Hegelian philosophy is much more marked. But at the close of the *Logic* he thus explicitly proclaims his abandonment of the view, common to Hegel and Green, that 'the real is the rational,' that thought and reality are identical. 'Unless thought stands for something that falls beyond mere intelligence, if "thinking" is not used with some strange implication that never was part of the meaning of the word, a lingering scruple still forbids us to believe that reality can ever be purely rational. It may come from a failure in my metaphysics, or from a weakness of the flesh which continues to blind me, but the notion that existence could be the same as understanding strikes as cold and ghost-like as the dreariest materialism. That the glory of this world in the end is appearance leaves the world more glorious, if we feel it is a show of some fuller splendour; but the sensuous curtain is a deception and a cheat, if it hides some colourless movement of atoms, some spectral woof of impalpable abstractions, or unearthly ballet of bloodless categories. Though dragged to such conclusions, we cannot embrace them. Our principles may be true, but they are not reality. They no more *make* that Whole which commands our devotion, than some shredded dissection of human tatters *is* that warm and breathing beauty of flesh which our hearts found delightful.'[1]

Mr. Bradley calls his chief work 'a sceptical study of first principles,'[2] and its result is to establish the ultimate

[1] *Principles of Logic*, p. 533.
[2] *Appearance and Reality*, Pref., p. xii.

inadequacy of all our so-called knowledge. The contradictions of thought, he argues, prove our ignorance of reality. Since our ideas contradict existence, as well as one another, the world of thought is shown to be a world of mere appearance. In its very nature, thought is vitiated by a fatal flaw : it is discursive or relational, and relations never express reality or existence. The very act of judgment is fallacious. To judge is to predicate one idea or concept of another, or rather of reality as already so far conceived in the subject-concept ; but the two concepts are for ever different from one another. We never succeed in solving 'the old puzzle, how to justify the attributing to a subject something other than itself, and which the subject is not.'[1] 'The problem of reconciling intelligibly the diversity with the unity . . . so far has shown itself intractable.'[2] This holds of the self, as well as of the not-self ; 'in whatever way the self is taken, it will prove to be appearance.'[3] It follows that we are limited to the apprehension of mere appearances. Only the self-consistent is real, and *our* reality is never self-consistent. 'Our failure so far lies in this, that we have not found the way in which appearances can belong to reality.'[4]

On the other hand, we must admit the reality of the appearances, although not *as* they appear. Since they belong to, or are 'owned' by reality, the appearances must be harmonious or self-consistent ; and to be harmonious, they must submit to the modification which renders them capable of such existence. 'We may say that everything, which appears, is somehow real in such a way as to be self-consistent. The character of the real is to possess everything phenomenal in a harmonious form. . . . Appearance must belong to reality, and it must therefore be concordant and other than it seems. The bewildering mass of phenomenal diversity must hence somehow be at unity and self-consistent ; for it cannot be elsewhere than in reality, and reality excludes discord.'[5] The clue to the

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, p. 57.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 58.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 119.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 132.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

nature of Reality or the Absolute is found in the unity of that immediate experience, sentience or 'feeling,' which conceptual or discursive thought breaks up into distinct objects and subjects, and which such thought is itself unable to restore. The lower or infra-relational unity of feeling suggests dimly to us the nature of the higher or supra-relational unity in which the differences of the finite or phenomenal world are overcome and fused in a single all-inclusive and harmonious Whole. The same term, 'experience,' covers both—the unity which is below and that which is above thought. The Absolute is a single, all-inclusive, and perfectly harmonious experience. That there is such a perfect experience, victorious over all the difficulties which beset the human understanding, we must assume; but its nature we can apprehend only in dim outline and by analogy with its lower prototype of mere animal feeling. Its detailed content—*how* the contradictions are overcome—is beyond our grasp. All that we can say is that 'somehow'—we know not how—these contradictions *are* overcome, and the Whole is experienced as such.

While no finite object, or object of thought, survives unchanged, or as such, in the Absolute, but all alike suffer transmutation when resolved into the ultimate Reality, yet this change may partake more of the nature of supplementation or more of that of negation and suppression. 'The Absolute, we may say in general, has no assets beyond appearances; and again, with appearances alone to its credit, the Absolute would be bankrupt. All of these are worthless alike apart from transmutation. But, on the other hand once more, since the amount of change is different in each case, appearances differ widely in their degrees of truth and reality. There are predicates which, in comparison with others, are false and unreal.'[1] 'The more an appearance, in being corrected, is transmuted and destroyed, the less reality can such an appearance contain; or, to put it otherwise, the less

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, p. 489.

genuinely does it represent the Real.'[1] The criteria of Reality are inclusiveness, or expansion, and harmony, or self-consistency: 'the amount of either wideness or consistency gives the degree of reality and also of truth.'[2] These are, in reality, only two aspects of the same criterion. 'For a satisfaction determined from the outside cannot internally be harmonious, while, on the other hand, if it became all-inclusive, it would have become also concordant.'[3] Since the Real is the individual, in which alone 'the actual identity of idea and existence' is attained, it follows that 'throughout our world, whatever is individual is more real and true; for it contains within its own limits a wider region of the Absolute, and it possesses more intensely the type of self-sufficiency.'[4]

The application of this standard of Reality and Truth legitimates an idealistic, as opposed to a naturalistic interpretation of the world. Nature is absorbed in Spirit, though Spirit itself is absorbed in the Absolute. We are even warranted in saying that Nature, as apprehended by the ordinary man, still more as seen and felt by the poet and painter, is more real than Nature as scientifically interpreted. 'The Nature, studied by the observer and by the poet and painter, is in all its sensible and emotional fulness a very real Nature. It is in most respects more real than the strict object of physical science.' The latter 'has not a high degree of reality and truth. It is a mere abstraction made and required for a certain purpose.' 'Our principle, that the abstract is the unreal, moves us steadily upward. It forces us first to rejection of bare primary qualities, and it compels us in the end to credit Nature with our higher emotions. That process can cease only where Nature is quite absorbed into spirit, and at every stage of the process we find increase in reality.'[5] 'In a complete philosophy the whole world of appearance would be set out as a progress. . . . On this scale pure Spirit would mark the extreme most removed from lifeless Nature. And, at each rising degree of this scale, we

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, p. 376. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 375.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 412. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 382. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 495.

should find more of the first character with less of the second. The ideal of spirit, we may say, is directly opposite to mechanism. Spirit is a unity of the manifold in which the externality of the manifold has utterly ceased. The universal here is immanent in the parts, and its system does not lie somewhere outside and in the relations between them. It is above the relational form and has absorbed it in a higher unity, a whole in which there is no division between elements and laws.'[1]

Yet even in Spirit we have not apprehended the Absolute; even it must be transmuted and absorbed in that higher unity and totality. 'Pure spirit is not realised except in the Absolute. It can never appear as such and with its full character in the scale of existence. Perfection and individuality belong only to that Whole in which all degrees alike are at once present and absorbed.'[2] The interpretation of Reality as Spirit is the highest truth we can reach about it; but even Truth itself is not real. 'Reality is concrete, while the truest truth must still be more or less abstract.'[3] 'It must be admitted that, in the end, no possible truth is quite true. It is a partial and inadequate translation of that which it professes to give bodily. And this internal discrepancy belongs irremovably to truth's proper character.'[4] We must indeed insist upon the difference between 'absolute' and 'finite' truth. The former is not '*intellectually* corrigible.' 'There is no intellectual alteration which could possibly, as general truth, bring it nearer to ultimate Reality. . . . Absolute truth is corrected only by passing outside the intellect. It is modified only by taking in the remaining aspects of experience. But in this passage the proper nature of truth is, of course, transformed and perishes. . . . Truth is one aspect of experience, and is therefore made imperfect and limited by what it fails to include'[5] We can know the universe only in its general character, not in its details. 'It is not known, and it never, as a whole, can be known, in such a sense that knowledge would be

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, p. 498.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 499
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 397.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 544.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 545.

the same as experience or reality. For knowledge and truth—if we suppose them to possess that identity—would have been, therewith, absorbed and transmuted.'[1] 'Truth is conditional, but it cannot be intellectually transcended. To fill in its conditions would be to pass into a whole beyond mere intellect.'[2]

It does not follow, however, that the Absolute is an unknowable Thing-in-itself. Mr. Bradley tells us that his aim has been to avoid this error of the sheer transcendence of the Absolute, no less than the opposite one, that of its complete and indiscriminate immanence in all appearances alike. 'It costs little to find that in the end Reality is inscrutable. . . . It is a simple matter to conclude further, perhaps, that the Real sits apart, that it keeps state by itself and does not descend into phenomena. Or it is as cheap, again, to take up another side of the same error. The Reality is viewed perhaps as immanent in all its appearances, in such a way that it is, alike and equally, present in all. Everything is so worthless on one hand, so divine on the other, that nothing can be viler or can be more sublime than anything else. It is against both sides of this mistake, it is against this empty transcendence and this shallow Pantheism, that our pages may be called one sustained polemic.'[3] 'Reality appears in its appearances, and they are its revelation ; and otherwise they also could be nothing whatever. The Reality comes into knowledge, and, the more we know of anything, the more in one way is Reality present with us. The Reality is our criterion of worse and better, of ugliness and beauty, of true and false, and of real and unreal. It in brief decides between, and gives a general meaning to, higher and lower. It is because of this criterion that appearances differ in worth; and, without it, lowest and highest would, for all we know, count the same in the universe. And Reality is one Experience, self-pervading and superior to mere relations. Its character is the opposite of that fabled extreme which is barely mechanical, and it is, in

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, p. 545. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 547.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 551.

the end, the sole perfect realisation of spirit. We may fairly close this work then by insisting that Reality is spiritual. There is a great saying of Hegel's, a saying too well known, and one which without some explanation I should not like to endorse. But I will end with something not very different, something perhaps more certainly the essential message of Hegel. Outside of spirit there is not, and there cannot be, any reality, and, the more that anything is spiritual, so much the more is it veritably real.'[1]

How far Mr. Bradley has travelled from the positions of earlier English idealists must be clear from the account of his philosophy which has just been given. But we may signalise, in conclusion, three important points in which he dissents from the teaching of Green, his most important predecessor. The first is the ultimateness of personality. While Green confidently applied the conception of self-consciousness to God, Mr. Bradley regards this conception, like all others, as inapplicable to the Absolute. The self being, equally with the not-self, mere appearance, and the conception of an infinite person being self-contradictory, it follows that the Absolute is supra-personal. Personality is indeed a higher degree of reality than that of impersonal things. 'It is better to affirm personality than to call the Absolute impersonal. But neither mistake should be necessary. The Absolute stands above, and not below, its internal distinctions.'[2] Secondly, he dissents from Green's doctrine of the ultimateness of morality; this too is for him only appearance, not reality. 'The radical vice of all goodness' is seen in the irreconcilable dualism of the ethical ideals of self-realisation and self-sacrifice. 'It is the essential nature of my self, as finite, equally to assert and, at the same time, to pass beyond itself; and hence the objects of self-sacrifice and of self-advancement are each equally mine.'[3] This inconsistency of goodness, its 'self-contradiction in principle,' proves that 'goodness is not absolute or ulti-

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, p. 552. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 533.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 417.

mate; it is but one side, one partial aspect, of the nature of things.' On the other hand, since in the Absolute no appearance is lost, 'the good is a main and essential factor in the universe. By accepting its transmutation it both realises its own destiny and survives in the result.' While the opposition between good and evil is, like that between truth and error, in the end unreal, 'it is, for all that, emphatically actual and valid. Error and evil are facts, and most assuredly there are degrees of each; and whether anything is better or worse, does without any doubt make a difference to the Absolute. And certainly the better anything is, the less totally in the end is its being overruled. But nothing, however good, can in the end be real precisely as it appears. Evil and good, in short, are not ultimate; they are relative factors which cannot retain their special characters in the Whole.'[1] Finally, the denial of the ultimateness of personality and morality leads to the repudiation of Green's doctrine of personal immortality as an implication of the moral life. Mr. Bradley closes his discussion of the arguments for such a view with the remark that they all 'rest on assumptions negatived by the general results of this volume. . . . And to debate this special question, apart from an enquiry into the ultimate nature of the world, is surely unprofitable.'[2]

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, p. 430. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 510.

CONCLUSION

PRESENT TENDENCIES IN ENGLISH PHILOSOPHY

It is the task of the future historian to determine the significance of the present tendencies of philosophical thought in England. In philosophy, as in literature, it is impossible to estimate the importance of a movement before it has had time to develop its implications. What absorbs the attention of the present generation may sink into insignificance in the eyes of a later age. Still, it seems fitting to conclude this study of English philosophy with a brief, and necessarily tentative, indication of the new developments which seem to be taking place in the present day in that philosophy, and to suggest their connexion with those earlier lines of thought which we have endeavoured to trace.

Two new features, both of which date from the closing decades of the nineteenth century, may be noted before we attempt this characterisation. The first is the confluence of the two streams of English and American philosophy. There has occurred, within a quite recent period, a remarkable development of philosophical activity in America, and philosophical discussion in England has received a distinct impulse from that development. It seems certain that, in the future, the movement of philosophical thought in England and America will be a single movement, and that English philosophy will gain, in depth as well as in volume, by the combination. The second impulse has come from the new scientific spirit in which the problems of psychology have recently been investigated, the works which mark the inauguration of the new epoch

being Professor James Ward's article 'Psychology' in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1886) and William James's *Principles of Psychology* (1890). The 'new' psychology has been prosecuted in America with an ardour greater even than in England; and in both countries the conviction has grown that, while it is necessary to differentiate psychology with a new sharpness from metaphysics, as well as from logic and ethics, full account must be taken of its results if our theories in these departments of philosophy are to be scientifically based. English philosophy has tended in the past, as we have seen, to adopt the psychological method. The more adequate understanding of the psychological problem seems to promise much new light on the limitations of psychology, as well as the correction of certain errors in philosophy which were the result of an inadequate psychology.

The most striking feature of the present situation is the absence of any really constructive or reconstructive metaphysical effort. On all hands we find signs of dissatisfaction with the results of such efforts in the past, of dissatisfaction with idealism in particular. While the idealism of the nineteenth century has still such distinguished representatives as Mr. Bosanquet in England and Professor Royce in America (to mention only the most outstanding names), there is, even within the idealistic school, a reaction against the intellectualistic tendency of that view. The reaction against idealism takes various forms—that of the reassertion of empiricism, of a 'new realism,' and of pragmatism. The common feature of these reactions, over and above their common hostility to idealism, is an effort to approximate philosophy to science. They all alike are mainly concerned with questions of the theory of knowledge, of logic or methodology, rather than with properly metaphysical questions; and in all of them alike we may see the effect, somewhat paralysing, of the great scientific movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century upon the philosophical mind of the English-speaking race.

It is doubtless, in part, a consequence of the attention drawn by psychology to the affective and volitional aspects of the mental life, as well as in reaction from Green's view of reality as a system of relations, that within, as well as without the idealistic school, a protest has been raised against 'intellectualism' or 'rationalism.' The publication of *Appearance and Reality* (1893) marks a turning-point in this direction. In that work Mr. Bradley seems fatally to depreciate our knowledge, in the strict sense, of the Absolute, insisting, as we have seen, upon the inevitable inadequacy of Truth, and the necessity of supplementing our intellectual apprehension of Reality by other modes or attitudes which enable us to realise its other aspects. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that, among those who are in essential agreement with the idealistic point of view, a new stress has recently been laid on the significance of the life of will or moral personality, a tendency which is in keeping with the ethical trend of English philosophy in the past and not unconnected with the influence of the Scottish school.[1]

Perhaps the most characteristic statement of the empirical reaction against idealism, as well as one of the most characteristic documents of contemporary English philosophy, is found in Robert Adamson's *Development of Modern Philosophy* (1903). Adamson's earlier works on the philosophies of Kant and Fichte and his article on 'Logic' in the *Encylopædia Britannica* (ninth edition) are written from the standpoint of a convinced adherent of idealism. The volumes just mentioned, published posthumously under the editorial care of Professor Sorley, contain the substance of his lectures as professor of logic and metaphysics in the University of Glasgow, and indicate, in a clear though brief and tentative way, how radically his views had changed in the later years of his philosophical activity. The keynote is struck in the inaugural address

[1] *Cf.* A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, *Scottish Philosophy* (1885), *Hegelianism and Personality* (1887), *Man's Place in the Cosmos* (1897); G. H. Howison, *The Limits of Evolution* (1901).

of 1895.[1] 'Philosophy,' he says, 'must keep close to experience and draw its sustenance therefrom.' What is now needed in philosophy is a reconciliation between the idealism of the early part of the nineteenth century and the new scientific knowledge of detail which was the attainment of the second half of that century. Philosophy must be reconstructed so as to interpret our growing experience of nature and man. The fundamental error of idealism is seen in the Kantian view that knowledge or experience is the product of the activity of the knowing subject, which introduces its own principles of unity into the alien and chaotic material of sensation. In truth, mind is rather the product of experience than its presupposition. Since it is 'the space-character in certain contents of our sense-experience' that first leads to the differentiation of subject and object, space cannot itself be a subjective form or mental condition of that experience. Similarly, it is the constant connexion, the ordered process of experience, that first suggests the idea of cause, not the idea of causal connexion that first makes such experience possible. In general, the distinction between thought and perception or experience is simply the distinction between the more and the less developed, the more and the less general or abstract, the more complex and the simpler apprehension of reality. Idealism regards the abstract and general as the presupposition of that experience of which it is, in truth, the late result. If the abstract order of thought is to have real significance, it must be rooted in the actual character of reality as apprehended in experience. 'In the long run, the basis of all logical necessity is the necessity of fact.'

A more constructive statement, on experiential lines, is to be found in Mr. Shadworth Hodgson's *Metaphysic of Experience* (1898), in which, according to a recent writer, 'the traditional method of English philosophy is, at the present day, expounded most clearly, and accepted most

[1] *Development of Modern Philosophy*, ii. pp. 3–22.

unequivocally.'[1] A reflective analysis of experience discloses, Mr. Hodgson holds, the distinctness, though inseparableness, of consciousness and existence, knowledge and reality, subject and object. Reality, as the content of experience, is the object of consciousness or knowledge; but as existent, it is conditioned by, and continuous with the entire context of that reality which includes consciousness no less truly than consciousness includes it. Consciousness, in other words, does not account for itself; it is part of a greater whole, in which the conditions of its existence must be sought. And beyond the seen, or finite and material conditions, lie the unseen and infinite conditions which, though beyond the reach of speculative knowledge, are the postulates of a practical faith in the reality of moral distinctions.

The realistic reaction, which seems to be gaining force both in England and in America, and which is associated in this country with the names of Mr. Bertrand Russell and Mr. George E. Moore, is difficult to describe, in the absence of any systematic statement of the position. It appears to be a subtler version of Natural Realism, a doctrine of the distinct and independent existence of the object, as unaffected by our knowledge of it. In opposition to the idealistic view of relations as internal or organic, constituted by the knowing mind, it is insisted that relations are external, and do not affect the nature of the things or terms related. In this view of relation these writers seek a way out of the difficulties which the idealistic interpretation has found to be insuperable.

Current statements of the view are mainly logical and methodological, insisting upon the necessity of a new logic as the presupposition of a better metaphysic. As Mr. Russell says, 'What seems to me so far firmly established is a logic and a method, rather than any positive metaphysical results.'[2]

[1] T. M. Forsyth, *English Philosophy*, p. 185.
[2] *Journal of Philosophy*, viii. 160.

Perhaps the most novel, as it is certainly the most prominent, form of the reaction against idealism is that of Pragmatism, a name which suggests its affinity with the practical and ethical trend which we have seen to be one of the most characteristic features of English philosophy in the past. But the new movement strikes a note unheard till now in the national philosophy. Those who had hitherto insisted upon the supremacy of the ethical interest and the necessities of the practical life claimed for faith the right and the ability to answer, in its own practical way, the questions which were found to be unanswerable in terms of knowledge; they affirmed the necessity of faith as a substitute for reasoned knowledge. The new contention of Pragmatism is that knowledge itself depends on practical considerations, that the intellect always and inevitably works in subordination to the will and its purposes, that all knowledge is utilitarian, and that the criterion of truth is not conformity to reality, but its instrumental value, the results which follow from its acceptance.

The movement originated in America, and is associated in that country with the names of William James and Professor John Dewey, while its most important English advocate is Dr. F. C. S. Schiller.[1] James, to whose gift of style and reputation as a psychologist the theory owes much of its popularity, dedicated his *Will to Believe* (1897) to Mr. C. S. Peirce, to whom, in *Pragmatism* (1907), he attributes the origin of the name and the theory. 'In an article entitled "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," in the *Popular Science Monthly* for January 1878, Mr. Peirce, after pointing out that our beliefs are really rules for action, said that, to develop a thought's meaning, we need only determine what conduct it is fitted to produce: that conduct is for us its sole significance. And the tangible fact at the root of all our thought-distinctions, however subtle, is that there

[1] *Cf.* Dewey, *Studies in Logical Theory* (1903): Schiller, *Humanism* (1903), and *Studies in Humanism* (1907); Henry Sturt (and others), *Personal Idealism* (1902).

is no one of them so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice. To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object may involve—what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, whether immediate or remote, is then for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all. This is the principle of Peirce, the principle of pragmatism. It lay entirely unnoticed by any one for twenty years, until I, in an address before Professor Howison's philosophical union at the university of California, brought it forward again and made a special application of it to religion.'[1]

James's own statement of the method of pragmatism is on the same lines as that of Peirce, making the criterion of truth purely practical, and interpreting knowledge as the reaction of the intellect, in the service of the will, to the needs of the practical life as these change with its changing circumstances. 'The pragmatic method,' he tells us, 'is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences. What difference would it practically make to any one if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle.'[2] In other words, the theoretical must be reduced to the practical difference. The pragmatic attitude is 'the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, "categories," supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts.'[3] In an essay on 'Reflex Action and Theism,' first published in 1881, James offers the same interpretation of the function of thought in the life of man. It is only 'the middle segment of the mental curve, and not its termination': the mediator between sensation and action, or, better, reaction. 'As the last theoretic pulse dies away, it does not leave the

[1] *Pragmatism*, pp. 46, 47. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

mental process complete: it is but the forerunner of the practical moment, in which alone the cycle of mentality finds its rhythmic pause. We easily delude ourselves about this middle stage. Sometimes we think it final, and sometimes we fail to see, amid the monstrous diversity in the length and complication of the cogitations which may fill it, that it can have but one essential function, and that the one we have pointed out—the function of defining the direction which our activity, immediate or remote, shall take.'[1] 'From its first dawn to its highest actual attainment, we find that the cognitive faculty, where it appears to exist at all, appears but as one element in an organic mental whole, and as a minister to higher mental powers—the powers of will. Such a thing as its emancipation and absolution from these organic relations receives no faintest colour of plausibility from any fact we can discern.'[2] In the *Principles of Psychology* (1890) he had already pointed out that the whole activity of conception is determined by 'the necessity which my finite and practical nature lays upon me. My thinking is first and last and always for the sake of my doing. . . . Our scope is narrow, and we must attack things piecemeal, ignoring the solid fullness in which the elements of Nature exist, and stringing one after another of them together in a serial way, to suit our little interests as they change from hour to hour.'[3]

The statement of the theory favoured by Professor Dewey and Dr. Schiller is rather that which is suggested by the actual procedure of science in the verification of hypotheses by the service which they render in the interpretation of our experience. As Professor James himself summarises their teaching: 'Everywhere, these teachers say, "truth" in our ideas and beliefs means the same thing that it means in science. It means, they say, nothing but this, that ideas (which themselves are but parts of our experience) become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other

[1] *The Will to Believe*, pp. 123–4. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
[3] *Principles of Psychology*, ii. 334.

parts of our experience, to summarise them and get about among them by conceptual short-cuts instead of following the interminable succession of particular phenomena. Any idea upon which we can ride, so to speak; any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labour; is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true instrumentally.'[1] In the *Principles of Psychology*, however, James had himself already clearly affirmed the teleological or instrumental significance of conceptual thought, and had identified this interpretation with that which connects theory with practice. 'The conception with which we handle a bit of sensible experience is really nothing but a teleological instrument. This whole function of conceiving, of fixing, and holding fast to meanings, has no significance apart from the fact that the conceiver is a creature with partial purposes and private ends.'[2]

There are two main grounds on which the Pragmatists rest their opposition to Absolute Idealism. The first is that it is the expression of an abstractly theoretical, rationalistic, or intellectualistic attitude, while the right attitude is practical or voluntaristic. This has been made sufficiently clear by the account now given of the pragmatic view of truth. The second is that Absolute Idealism is a 'monistic' view of reality, which fails to do justice to the detailed facts of our experience, and especially to the facts of the moral life and the individual freedom of initiative which these facts imply. As against such an interpretation of reality as a 'block-universe,' the Pragmatists maintain the necessity of adopting a 'pluralistic' view.[3] Such a pluralistic reaction against idealistic Monism is not, of course, peculiar to the pragmatists; but what distinguishes the pragmatic assertion of this view is the ethical interest which is its primary source, as we see from such a characteristic utterance as the following from James's essay on 'The Dilemma of Determinism,' first published in 1884. 'The

[1] *Pragmatism*, p. 58. [2] *Principles of Psychology*, i. 482.
[3] Cf. James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909).

indeterminism I defend, the free-will theory of popular sense based on the judgment of regret . . . gives us a pluralistic, restless universe, in which no single point of view can ever take in the whole scene; and to a mind possessed of the love of unity at any cost, it will, no doubt, remain forever inacceptable. . . . But while I freely admit that the pluralism and the restlessness are repugnant and irrational in a certain way, I find that every alternative to them is irrational in a deeper way. The indeterminism . . . offends only the native absolutism of my intellect,—an absolutism which, after all, perhaps, deserves to be snubbed and kept in check. But the determinism . . . violates my sense of moral reality through and through.'[1]

[1] *The Will to Believe*, pp. 176–7.

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